

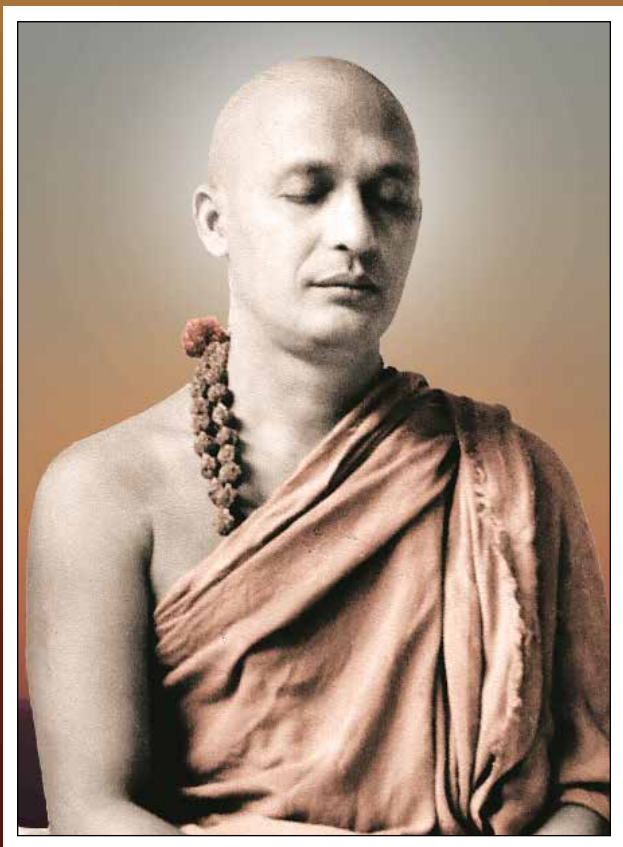
2013 Golden Jubilee edition

BIHAR YOGA®

# Mere Aradhya

## My Beloved Guru

Swami Dharmashakti Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India



# Mere Aradhya

## My Beloved Guru



1963–2013  
GOLDEN JUBILEE

**WORLD YOGA CONVENTION 2013**  
GANGA DARSHAN, MUNGER, BIHAR, INDIA  
23rd–27th October 2013



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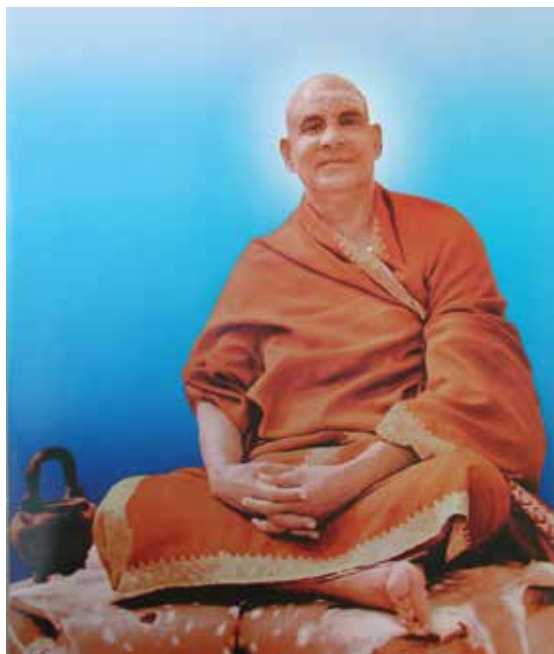
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## Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to  
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated  
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*



## Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati  
who continues to inspire and guide us  
on our yogic and spiritual journey.*



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# Dedication

I humbly offer these few words I have managed to write, at the feet of my beloved Gurudev, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, a master of yoga and a matchless jnani, who is striving to unleash the benefits of yoga for the welfare of all mankind, and endeavouring to transform the vedantic precepts of non-duality and unity into indestructible bonds of universal love and fraternity.

I first saw Sri Swamiji on 3rd April 1953 and then and there recognized him as my destined guru. Since then I have come to know the thoughts, deeds, plans and visions of Sri Swamiji in great depth and detail. Sometimes I wonder whether a human being can indeed raise himself to such towering heights of divine transcendence as Sri Swamiji has. He epitomizes the qualities of a *maryada purusha*, the ideal human being, for whom tyaga, tapasya, yoga and sannyasa are a way of life.

Sri Swamiji set off on his spiritual quest all alone, and somewhere along the way our paths happened to cross. He initiated me into a life devoted to surrender, service and sacrifice. My husband, my son and myself have totally dedicated ourselves to the grand mission of Sri Swamiji. Each and every drop of our sweat and blood, each and every thought in our minds, each and every sentiment in our hearts, each and every vibration of our pranas belongs to him. We have resolved to dedicate our lives to spreading the sacred dharma which Sri Swamiji has upheld all his life.

At first Swami Satyavratanaanda, my husband, related with Sri Swamiji as a guru bhai. Later, having dedicated himself to Sri Swamiji's mission, Satyavratji worshipped him as his guru. Guru and disciple worked like two bodies, but one soul. That there could be anything beyond working for the guru with total faith and surrender was a thought that never even occurred to the disciple.

In Satyavratji's own words, "I consider myself extremely fortunate to have received initiation from Jagadguru Swami Sivananda and through his grace I found an exact replica of him in the form of Swami Satyananda, who became my jnana guru, my sannyasa guru. What I felt after getting initiated by Swami Sivananda is indescribable. And the way I see and understand Swami Satyananda now, will one day be shared by the world too. Today the world may not realize his worth, but a time will definitely come when the world will recognize and honour him for what he truly is. Whether I live to see that day or not, my soul definitely will, wherever it may be."

And for such a devoted disciple, Sri Swamiji had this to say, "I've come across only one man in my life who immersed himself in the service of his guru to such an extent that he became an example for the guru himself. So much so, that the guru inwardly acknowledged him as his own guru! That man was Satyavrat, whom I held in the greatest esteem and respect. We understood each other perfectly. No one comes anywhere near the level of mutual understanding we shared. And that is why he will always have a special place in my heart."

The same diligence to duty, total surrender to the guru and unswerving commitment to his mission, one finds in Satyavratji's image, Swami Niranjan. Who is Swami Niranjan? The unfolding events are giving us an indication, but the future is known only to Gurudev. Swami Niranjan's total surrender towards his guru, and Sri Swamiji's untold trust and love for him, present an exemplary ideal before modern civilization. And the mother has nothing more to say, she

feels blessed beyond measure. In the words of Sri Swamiji, “She alone is a worthy mother whose son is devoted to his deity and his preceptor.”

Despite the many torments and tribulations I faced, despite my own rebellious nature and revolutionary thoughts, by the grace of God I found a great guru, who treated me like a daughter, initiated me as his disciple, and groomed me for a special mission. And once I embarked on that mission, the destiny he had foreseen for me began to materialize.

Satyavratji was well-known in family and social circles for his saintly and virtuous character. His inspiration alone made me accomplish a great amount of work for family and society. It was his inspiration that made me start writing letters and articles for magazines. With Sri Swamiji’s encouragement and blessings, my penmanship gathered momentum. Besides handling his voluminous correspondence, I started transcribing and filing his lectures as well.

One day, out of the blue, Satyavratji remarked, “You have to write Gurudev’s biography.” The remark scared me. This was a task way beyond my capability. But his insistence forced me to start compiling relevant material as per his instructions. There was a lot of written material in my diaries, letters and files, and I started to go over it once again. Sri Swamiji used to have intimate conversations with Satyavratji. Whenever the topic turned to Sri Swamiji’s early life, Satyavratji used to note it down in shorthand and later I would transcribe it into my diary. I would also often discuss things with Sri Swamiji myself and share my own inspirations and ideas with him.

The workings of destiny are mysterious indeed. After Satyavratji’s accident, everything changed; it felt as if life had come to an end . . . Sri Swamiji came and re-organized everything. With his inspiration, instructions and blessings, things began moving like before. I started working on all the pending tasks. I thought of the book as well. Satyavratji’s words rang loud and clear in my ears, “There are eighteen Puranas, but this Guru Gita I am asking you to write may turn out to be the nineteenth one.”

Sri Swamiji had burst out laughing when he first heard this remark. “Okay, let’s see what you end up writing,” he had chuckled.

All these memories came flooding back to me. Thoughts of writing this book kept coming like waves upon the seashore. It felt as if Satyavratji was constantly chiding me, “Why haven’t you started the book yet?” Swami Niranjan also wanted me to write an account of Sri Swamiji’s momentous life. I was also conscious that I too was fast approaching the concluding chapter of my life. I had to complete my Guru Gita. Seeking the blessings of guru and God for the success of my undertaking, and forgiveness as well for any mistakes that I might commit, I finally began to write . . .

This book has been divided into six parts:

1. Glimpses of Sri Swamiji’s childhood
2. An account of his days in his guru’s ashram
3. Glimpses of his life as a wandering sannyasin
4. The beginning of the yoga movement
5. The expansion and consolidation of the mission
6. The culmination of the seer’s vision.

It has been my endeavour to present an exhaustive and complete account of the life and works of Sri Swamiji. His instructions and teachings have been compiled into dozens of books and translated into as many languages. This book is but a humble addition to that beautiful and growing collection.

It is not just my hope but firm conviction that these spiritual gems from Sri Swamiji’s life will light up the path of each and every spiritual seeker who reads them. If my assertion sounds presumptuous and vain, I humbly seek the reader’s indulgence . . .

Swamiji, you are the very personification of life’s eternal sadhana. Your sublime teachings have totally dispelled the dreary darkness from my life. And in the aura of that divine knowledge I have had a glimpse of eternal, inexhaustible bliss, which has inspired me to embark on this journey down memory lane, chronicling the little, poignant moments as

well as the great milestones of your epic life. I pray that I  
receive your grace, love and blessings forever and forever.

*Valmiki's poetic genius was awakened  
by the plaintive cry of a distraught crane.  
My pen breaks all barriers,  
as I listen to the tinkling sounds of the divine name.*

*Spring has blossomed in the midst of autumn,  
Cool nectar is flowing forth  
in the middle of scorching summer.  
The world will rejoice when it reads  
the scribbles made by my pen  
as it dances in sheer joy upon the surface of this paper.*

*My pen may not have the power  
to breathe life into the lifeless,  
but O God! grant that it may write over and over  
the saga of my guru,  
sublime and peerless.*

Nothing but the dust of my guru's feet,

—Swami Dharmashakti Saraswati





# Glimpses from Sri Swamiji's Childhood



When the world becomes shrouded in dark ignorance, a great spirit descends and, lighting the lamp of knowledge, banishes the darkness completely.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati is one such spiritual stalwart of this age. Shunning the petty pleasures and pastimes of the world, he chose to don the robes of dispassion, austerity and renunciation. He is a jnani and tyagi in the mould of Adiguru Shankaracharya. Looking at his sterling qualities of head, heart and hands, it appears as if God has showered him with His choicest gifts. His unswerving devotion to his guru and his sweet, affectionate behaviour towards one and all are ideals worthy of emulation.

*Anaashritah karmaphalam kaaryam karma karoti yah  
Sa sannyaasee cha yogee cha na niragnirna chaakriyah.*

He who performs his bounden duty without depending on the fruits of his actions – he is a Sannyasi and a Yogi, not he who merely renounces fire and action.

*(Bhagavad Gita, 6:1)*

We see in Swamiji a great ascetic, a great jnani and a great karma yogi, who has personified this grand ideal of the *Bhagavad Gita*. He is a perfect blend of jnana, karma and upasana; verily an epitome of ‘Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram’.



In the lap of the beautiful Himalayan ranges, amongst an endless expanse of towering firs and pines, lies the region known as Almora, the playground of ancient Kumaoni traditions, brimming with tales of the chivalry and courage of the ancient Chandravanshi kings and modern kings of Nepali descent. Nestled in this fairytale land is the small feudal estate of Bhikiyasen and Gaj Baigan. And that is the realm whose scion is Swami Satyananda Saraswati.

### **Lineage**

The feudal landlord of Bhikiyasen and Gaj Baigan, a Vaishnava in the Jaimini tradition, was erudite and cultured, and his estate spanned forty villages. His wife was a pious and religious Tibetan lady and his son, Krishnachandra Nayal, a well-mannered and intelligent youth. There were many temples in that region built by his forefathers and his standing instruction to the temple priests was: educate the children of this region well, everyone should have a knowledge of Hindi, Sanskrit, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Ramayana*.

After completing his education, Krishnachandra became a police officer. Like his father, he also laid a lot of emphasis on education, and proper schooling started in his villages. Krishnachandra married into the royal family of Nepal. His wife was a scholarly lady from the royal family. Krishnachandra's big feudal family was a mix of different cultures.

His father was a Kumaoni, his mother Tibetan and his wife Nepali. His parents were followers of the orthodox Sanatana dharma, while Krishnachandra himself was of modern views and an Aryasamaji. Differences must have cropped up every now and then. Eventually Krishnachandra left his rural estate and settled in Almora. His bungalow was in the Nayalkholi section of the town.

## **Birth**

Krishnachandra's children were born in Almora. The first child was a girl, and the next one a boy. There is something to be said about the scenic landscapes of Almora. They have a certain bewitching beauty. In the blissful lap of the sparkling, snow-capped mountains, streams of golden light poured into the innermost core of this little child, where they blossomed fully and blessed him that he may fulfil the grand destiny envisioned for him.

Amidst the ethereal mountains and vales of Almora, where the nights are silvery and the days golden, where dawns are wrapped in mysterious mists, where the golden rays of the sun weave sparkling, multi-hued rainbows, there, ensconced in the lap of Mount Kailash, this newborn child fluttered his eyelids at the stroke of midnight on 25th December 1923, and from his lips sounded the sacred words, "Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram". That boy was Dharmendra Kumar Nayal.

Captivated by the beauty of the majestic, snow-covered mountain ranges, and wondering at the mysteries hidden inside their myriad caves, the boy unceasingly gazed at their magnificent sunrises and sunsets in awe and wonder. An inner urge made him listen intently to the sounds about him – the cheerful chirping of jungle birds, resounding roars of wild animals and, above all, nostalgic echoes from far-off mountains and valleys of vedic chants from a bygone era.

From the very beginning, Dharmendra found nature mysterious and awe-inspiring. The blossoming of flowers, and their subsequent wilting was an unexplainable wonder. Early sunrises were a joy to behold and so were the silvery

moonlit nights. “Who is behind all this?” he would ponder for hours at a time. If he ever made the mistake of asking his father, he would get a stock reply, “It is futile to wonder about such a thing. It’s a natural event, that’s all. No one has succeeded in explaining it, and no one ever will.” If he asked his mother, she would say, “This is all God’s *lila*, his divine play. Can anyone ever fathom it? You should rather focus on gaining name and fame in life.” The child’s curiosity was never satisfied; rather the chain of thoughts kept expanding. “One day I will definitely get to the bottom of all this,” he resolved to himself.

## **Childhood**

Dharmendra was four years old now. His parents must have pinned great hopes on their precocious lad. He was extremely focused and intelligent. Today it seems that those childhood games and pastimes of his were nothing but an indication of his future. He used to become so engrossed in erecting buildings and towers with multicoloured blocks of wood that he would forget everything else. One day he was busy erecting a seven-storeyed building. With his tiny hands he would painstakingly place the wooden blocks one on top of another, and they would soon come tumbling down. But the boy would never accept defeat. He would start all over again. His parents were elated at their son’s diligence. His father would say, “Our boy is very diligent and methodical. I will make him an engineer.” His mother would say, “What nonsense! He will become a great leader like his maternal uncle.” The boy, totally oblivious to what the future held in store, remained fully absorbed in the immediate task at hand.

Not only was the boy intelligent, but a motivated idealist too. He was always planning grand schemes with his elder sister: “We will open hospitals and distribute free medicines to all. There won’t be a single sick person left in this world,” or, “We will construct temples without doors, where everyone can come in and worship,” or, “We will build kitchens with big ovens and we will cook food in huge pots. No one will

ever face hunger again,” or, “We will get on an aeroplane and travel all over the world in it.” Sometimes their talk would turn to scientific matters and at other times they would become so absorbed in the natural beauty around them that they would sit for hours together. Sometimes they would discuss strange and abstruse subjects. They weren’t afraid of earning their father’s displeasure either.

But their grandmother harboured old-fashioned views. A four-year-old boy thinking and talking about science and religion was enough to set her alarm bells ringing. She would propitiate various gods and goddesses, and get the priests to do *japa* and *havan* to ward off any impending misfortune for the boy. Dharmendra’s mother would also get a little worried and upset over his unusual behaviour, but her many household chores left her with little time for anything else. She was obsessed with the idea of purity, and this wouldn’t let her delegate any household jobs to servants. This notion was carried to such an extreme that the children were not allowed to enter the kitchen. They would sit outside the kitchen door and she would serve them from inside. She was a pious and religious lady who regularly studied the scriptures. She was quite generous and had a big heart as well. However, when it came to family traditions, she would not accept any compromise. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why Dharmendra developed a rebellious streak.

His father was a follower of Arya Samaj, and studied a lot of books, secular as well as spiritual, and performed *havan* every morning. He was a *kshatriya* landlord who had ruled over his subjects from a young age. Then his subsequent job as a policeman hardened him all the more. When roused to anger, he would shout, “If you don’t listen to me, I’ll shoot you.” Like father, like son, however, as Dharmendra could never be frightened or browbeaten by such claims and he would simply throw his father’s words back at him. He could handle a gun too! He would frequently talk about going on a hunt and shooting a tiger.

## **Education**

As the children grew older, the parents became anxious about their education. After due deliberation, home-schooling was ruled out for them. Firstly, there was the informal atmosphere at home, then the granny's overly affectionate nature, not to mention the many relatives and family friends who lived nearby. The old customs followed at home would also have proved a stumbling block to acquiring a modern outlook and education. These considerations led Krishnachandra to admit his eight-year-old daughter and six-year-old son to a missionary convent in Nainital. It was a school of the British era, where teaching was done through the medium of English and where only English children, and a few Indian children from royal families, were granted admission.

Dharmendra was a very naughty boy, but there was a certain charm in his words and deeds that impressed everyone. His words wove grand dreams in the minds of his listeners. Soon he became the unquestioned leader of his fellow students. The sisters of the convent also loved him very much. Away from home, he became fully independent and self-reliant. His thoughts and deeds began to flow freely and naturally, an indication of his dynamic future.

The English kids couldn't bear Dharmendra's rising popularity, but they were all afraid of him. If any of the boys dared oppose or intimidate Dharmendra, he would get a sound thrashing. The sisters would try to instil some good sense in him, but he had his own ideas. He would never tolerate injustice of any kind.

## **First spiritual experience**

Dharmendra had come home during the school holidays. One day, all of a sudden, he fell down and lapsed into unconsciousness. Everyone was greatly agitated, but after a little while he came to again. However, he kept on having this extraordinary experience. Sometimes he would completely lose awareness of his physical body. At other times he would see his body clearly from outside. This was not a permanent

condition, but during that period his body would remain in a state of limbo.

His family grew increasingly alarmed by these inexplicable occurrences. They took him to doctors, healers and shamans, but to no avail. No one was able to shed any light on these mysterious experiences. How could they explain something that was arising from the auspicious karmas and samskaras of past lives? Dharmendra knew exactly what was happening, but he had the body and mind of a seven-year-old. How could he explain it to others? Everyone would scoff at him.

In those days, the route to Mansarovar and Mount Kailash passed through Almora. Saints and sages going on pilgrimage to Kailash would stop over in Almora. Dharmendra was shown to many of these saints by his family members.

Once Swami Nityananda, an old and experienced swami of a very high calibre, passed that way. As chance would have it, Dharmendra fell unconscious once again. Some of his family members went to the swami and requested him to take a look at the boy. Out of sheer curiosity, the swami came and saw the unconscious child. He must have understood his condition for he began repeating “Sri Ram Sri Ram” in the boy’s ears. Soon Dharmendra regained consciousness!

Swami Nityananda told the relieved parents, “This boy is not suffering from any disease. Sometimes of his own accord, he reaches a high state of consciousness, known as the state of pratyahara in yoga. This boy must be imparted spiritual training, it will work wonders for him. He is a divine soul after all.”

He also added a word of caution, “Don’t try to push the boy into worldly life. Let him traverse the path of yoga for that is his destined path.’ He instructed Dharmendra to repeat the mantra Om and also told him about Lord Rama and his exploits. Whenever Dharmendra began to experience loss of body consciousness, he would repeat the mantra Om and remember Lord Rama. During those timeless moments, he would feel extremely elated and joyful. What a wonder! Vast,



limitless consciousness hidden inside the body of this little boy. Perhaps divinity itself had donned this body for a great mission . . .

### **Versatile talents**

From a young age, Dharmendra had many friends and companions. He was talented in many games and sports. He was particularly fond of hunting. He was also very good at his studies. He composed prose and poetry, and was interested in various arts and sciences. Despite all these incessant activities, his inner spiritual experiences continued unabated, as if those experiences came to remind him time and again that he had a wealth of spiritual samskaras hidden within, which would undoubtedly manifest in the future.

He was leaving his classmates far behind in every activity and endeavour. He topped his class, and also stood first in debates and declamations. Older students were jealous of him, yet afraid too. His teachers, on the other hand, were extremely pleased to see the unfolding of his multifaceted talents.

Once, some foreign priests and dignitaries came to visit the school and a special function was organized in their honour. Dharmendra was selected to deliver the welcome speech and read out a poem in honour of the guests. The flair and finesse of the nine-year-old boy was not lost on them. "This boy will accomplish great things in life. Either as a great political leader or as a gifted spiritual teacher, he will definitely make a mark in life," they predicted, and rightly so. After this event, the sisters at the convent grew fonder of Dharmendra. They kept encouraging and motivating him to excel in all walks of life.

Dharmendra's father was amazed by his son's precocious talents. At the same time he was anxious and worried about his spiritual experiences. It was perhaps better to keep the boy nearby. So he brought him over from Nainital and admitted him to a good school in Almora. It broke the heart of the convent sisters, who were quite attached to him. At

their request, he would send Dharmendra to Nainital every now and then to visit them.

The presiding deities of the land of Almora rejoiced at the exploits of this gifted son of the soil. It seemed as if Goddess Saraswati had blessed him with skill and prowess in all the arts and sciences, the nightingale had lent sweetness to his voice, the sun dazzling radiance to his personality and the moon its soothing coolness!

*Guru griha gaye padan raghurai, alpakaal vidya sab payee* – in the *Ramacharitamanas*, Tulsidas relates how Lord Rama went to study at his guru's ashram and in a very short period of time learnt everything there was to learn. The same applied to Dharmendra. Besides learning the different subjects taught at school, Dharmendra's aptitude for literature, music and the fine arts was blossoming. His poems, written under pseudonyms such as 'Pallav' (the sprouting leaf), 'Hridayaheen' (the heartless), 'Premi' (the aficionado), 'Nirala' (the inimitable) and 'Vahi' (That), attracted the attention of literati and laity alike. People were amazed to learn that these beautiful and sensitive compositions flowed from the pen of a ten-year-old boy who was still studying in middle school. His poems were published in *Ma* and other magazines. *Ma* was a magazine started by local, literary-minded youths which printed stories, articles and poems. But what made the magazine really popular were the poems written by someone who called himself 'Hridayaheen' . . .

Dharmendra's father was an Aryasamaji, and being a police officer he knew the value of discipline. From the age of ten, Dharmendra was made to perform havan every morning after taking his bath. His mother would add, "Finish your Gita chanting before you sit for breakfast." Grandma would say, "Today is a Tuesday, go to the temple and worship Hanumanji before breakfast," or, "Go with the servant to the priest's house and deliver this prasad, only then can you have breakfast." Dharmendra would do everyone's bidding quietly, but he would say to himself, "I may be following everyone's orders now, but once I grow up, definitely not."

## **Influence of Gandhian ideology**

Dharmendra's mother always remained preoccupied. Either she would be reading from the scriptures, or performing worship, or busy in the kitchen. Purity was greatly valued then and so she would do all the kitchen chores herself. The little kids were looked after by a nanny or the granny. In spite of her hectic schedule, Dharmendra's mother would find time to read Mahatma Gandhi's books.

Gandhiji came to Almora in 1930 and she attended his public meetings. She was greatly impressed and met him personally. The encounter brought about a sea-change in her personality. Her rigid notions of purity acquired a degree of flexibility. A maidservant began helping with the kitchen chores. With spare time on her hands, Dharmendra's mother began attending political meetings and rallies. Soon she became an active worker in the freedom movement. She was at the forefront in picketing shops that sold foreign-made cloth and burning it in huge bonfires. She began travelling with Gandhiji to other towns and villages as well, carrying big bundles of khadi cloth for distribution.

Many times Inspector Krishnachandra Singh would himself arrest her and other associates for anti-British activities and then leave them in a jungle twenty to twenty-five kilometres away from town. The womenfolk of the mountains knew their way up and down the hills, plus they were full of patriotic fervour. They would make their way back in no time and restart their seditious activities with redoubled enthusiasm!

Things were okay till this point. And then Gandhiji started his program of emancipating women of ill-repute. Dharmendra's mother also participated actively. She would go to their homes, speak to them, and even share meals with them. This created uproar in her family circle. The relatives made a big issue out of it. They even tried to poison Krishnachandra's ears, but he understood the situation. He would not be easily provoked. He told the mischief-mongers in no uncertain terms, "You need not worry about my wife and family. She is my wife and I have full faith in her. She

is free to act according to the dictates of her conscience. Besides, whatever she is doing is right. I cannot find any fault with her.”

At some point, Dharmendra’s mother was also jailed with Gandhiji. Neighbours and relatives could not say anything to the father, but they scared the grandmother, threatening to excommunicate her family from their social circle. Grandma was incapable of saying or doing much in the matter. She just sold a hundred or so grams of her gold jewellery and had a few priests carry out havan for restoring peace and sanity in the family. When the father came to know of this, he was extremely annoyed. His principled and courageous stand in the entire episode was imbibed by the sensitive children as well.

### **Litterateur par excellence**

Dharmendra had two close friends, K.C. Joshi (Nanu) and Ashwini Kumar Pant (Aami). Their friendship was deep and intense. Following Dharmendra’s lead, Aami also began writing for *Ma* magazine. Shortly thereafter, Dharmendra began editing the *Bharat* periodical and with his encouragement, Aami also started a periodical by the name of *Aragami*. These boys would write out many copies of the entire periodical by hand, and distribute them to all and sundry.

Once poet laureate Sumitranandan Pant visited Almora, which also happened to be his birthplace. The boys met him and showed him copies of their respective journals. Sumitranandan Pant was very pleased to meet them, particularly Dharmendra Singh Nayal, then a ninth grade student. He lauded the boys’ efforts, but at the same time suggested that they should pool their talents and bring out a single, unified magazine.

Following his advice the two boys started *Aragami Bharat*. Despite Aami’s repeated requests, Dharmendra refused to become the chief editor. That position had to be taken up by Aami. ‘Pallav’ became the assistant editor. But it was Pallav who was the lifeblood of the magazine. It was he who did all the editing and proofreading.

Everyone was greatly impressed by the boys' endeavour. The boys received encouragement and support from all quarters. When they showed a copy of their new magazine to Sumitranandan Pant, he was extremely happy and wrote many poems for publication in the magazine. Nonetheless the heart and soul of the publication was Dharmendra, who wrote many stories, poems and articles under the names of Pallav, Hridayaheen, Nirala, Premi and Vahi. Even his teachers were amazed to see his effortless command over Hindi, Sanskrit and English. Around this time he began composing poems illustrating all the different metres of Hindi poetry. And he was crowned with total success in this ambitious endeavour of his.

Pallav's literary talent and poetic genius had fully blossomed by now. Once a poetry reading was organized in honour of Sumitranandan Pant. The poem composed and read by Pallav was adjudged the best. On that occasion, Pant had commented, "This boy will definitely carve a niche for himself in the world of Hindi literature." Pant's prophecy has come true today. The tiny boy of yesterday, Dharmendra, has turned into the towering sannyasin of today, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, whose books in Hindi and English are now world-renowned.

Besides Hindi, Dharmendra had a flair for both Sanskrit and English. He began writing in Sanskrit and started planning for an English magazine as well. Such mastery over three languages and literary genres, at such a young age, was extraordinary.

Since early childhood Dharmendra had always had a contemplative and serious side to his nature. He was extremely good academically, always securing full marks in Hindi and English. His Sanskrit teachers used to say that he wrote so well that given a chance they would give him twice the maximum marks!

In the English schools that Dharmendra attended, the teachers taught from the Bible as well. Seeing his keen intellect and excellent grasp over this subject too, the school authorities began to pay him special attention. They thought

that he would make an excellent preacher and missionary. Their hope turned out to be true, although not in the exact intended sense. Dharmendra not only became a preacher, but an authority and master of the religious and spiritual sciences. Verily he is a modern torch-bearer of ancient Indian spiritual thought and culture.

### **Spiritual inclination**

Gradually Dharmendra began to lose interest in the monotonous and dull education he was receiving at school. While the teacher taught algebra and geometry on the blackboard, he would sit in the last row writing poetry or editing articles for *Aragami Bharat*. He would often venture far out into the mountains with Aami and sit in solitude, enjoying the wondrous beauty of Mother Nature. Gazing at the distant Himalayan peaks, Dharmendra would soon become oblivious to his own existence. Whenever Aami questioned him about such episodes, he would laugh it off. How could his friends have known that in those glittering Himalayan peaks, Dharmendra was seeing golden glimpses of his own future?

As mentioned earlier the sadhus and swamis headed for Kailash-Mansarovar would sometimes stop over in Almora. Dharmendra used to meet them and question them on spiritual matters. They were quite impressed by his spiritual inclination and yearning, and readily told him many things about yoga and the inner life. Swami Nityananda used to come there every year. He was an experienced kriya yogi and he clarified many points regarding asana and pranayama. As a seven-year-old boy, Dharmendra had once asked Swami Nityananda about black magic and secret spells, about ghosts and goblins. Swami Nityananda used to carry a small stick in his hand. "Is this your magic wand?" Dharmendra had asked. The swami had replied, "Well, this is my yoga danda, but you may have it if you want." The young boy was extremely happy to receive that precious present from the swami.

The life and exploits of Sri Rama were very dear to Dharmendra. He would always be contemplating on them. Then

he would place any questions or doubts that he had before different sages and swamis. The character of Lord Rama exercised a great and far-reaching influence on his psyche, so much so that he accepted him as his *ishta*, his chosen deity.

### **First tantric experience**

At the age of ten, Pallav was not only engaged in academic and literary pursuits, but was also becoming interested in books of serious subject matter. Around this time he managed to lay his hands on a book on tantra. Together with a neighbourhood friend, he studied the book thoroughly. The two of them decided to investigate the techniques outlined in the book. In the meantime they also met a tantric baba nearby. They would meet the baba frequently and ask him about the practical aspects of tantra.

Soon they began their tantric sadhana. After a few days they decided to go to the cremation ground to perfect their mantra. With their ‘magic wand’ in hand, the two of them would go to the cremation ground, telling each other, “The magic wand is with us, what is there to fear? The power of our mantra will subdue any ghosts around. Then we will make them do all our daily chores.”

Somehow Dharmendra’s father got wind of his nocturnal adventures in the cremation ground. He was very annoyed and warned Dharmendra, “If you dare step out of the house at night, I will shoot you . . .”

“I can’t leave my mantra sadhana half-way,” thought Dharmendra, “I have to finish it at any cost.” The two friends decided to bring the ash from the cremation ground and finish their sadhana on Dharmendra’s rooftop. The next morning they brought the ash and placed it in a flower-pot on the roof. At night, when everyone had fallen asleep, Dharmendra tiptoed to the roof. From the terrace of the adjoining house, his friend also jumped over. Soon they began completing their unfinished business . . .

As their sadhana reached its culmination, bizarre things began to happen. It felt as if the whole house was shaking.

Dharmendra's younger brother began to cry and his mother and grandmother got very frightened. His father began searching for him but he was hiding on the terrace and the terrace-door was bolted from the outside. Dharmendra's father was growing angrier with each passing minute. "Open the door," he yelled, "otherwise I'll break open the door and shoot you." The entire atmosphere had become dark and eerie. Dharmendra's friend jumped over to his own rooftop and disappeared from view. Dharmendra's father was screaming at the top of his voice. Dharmendra threw away the ash and other pooja articles from the roof and opened the terrace door. As soon as he threw away the tantric objects, the atmosphere became normal and peaceful. Although his father was quite agitated, he also calmed down after a search of the roof revealed nothing untoward.

The next day, the two boys went to the tantric baba and told him the entire story. "Why did you throw away the ash that had been charged by the mantra? Now the ghost will definitely get annoyed and do something nasty to you," he said in a scary tone.

Dharmendra couldn't be frightened so easily. "Bah," he scoffed, "what can the ghost do to us?" But his friend felt scared. As chance would have it, two days later he met with an accident and broke his leg. Needless to say, Dharmendra left this tantric sadhana of ashes, corpses and ghosts for good.

### **Social environment**

Whenever Dharmendra visited the villages of Gaj or Bhikiyasen, he would come under the influence of an oppressive social environment. The custom of child-marriage was quite prevalent in those parts, and so were other archaic practices and traditions. Dharmendra belonged to a rich feudal family and his father was a police officer. The local people couldn't say anything to their faces but they gossiped behind their backs. They would say, "Their girl is grown-up now. What is the point in sending her to college? She should be married off as soon as possible. So should the boy, who is also of



marriageable age now. His education can continue on the side." At home, Grandma was also interested in seeing her grandchildren married soon.

At some point, a few self-appointed custodians of social propriety decided they couldn't bear this state of affairs anymore and tried to influence Dharmendra's father. But he told them clearly, "You need not worry about my children. I know what is good for them." The children's mother was a Congress Party worker. She was also not in favour of early marriage. Grandma was the only one in the family who was much aggrieved, for all the relatives kept bothering her on this account.

There was another reason behind Grandma's anxiety. She had solemnized her grandson's engagement when he was only two years old! Among the Kumaonis, children just one or two months old are engaged, sometimes even married. And in some instances the marriage is fixed even before their birth! Two long standing friends decide beforehand that if one of them has a son and the other a daughter, then their marriage is settled. And such marriages indeed take place.

Following this time-honoured tradition, as soon as Grandma saw a very good match for Dharmendra in her social circle, she promptly had the engagement ceremony solemnized. Dharmendra's father may have dissented, but his mother had no choice in the matter.

During his student days in Nainital, whenever Dharmendra came home in the holidays, all the neighbourhood children would gather and play together. The girl to whom he was betrothed would also come. A pretty girl by the name of Saraswati, she was dear to one and all. The children would tease Dharmendra about her. But he couldn't understand the reason behind the jokes. When his mother finally told him, he was furious indeed!

The parents of Saraswati were getting more anxious by the day. Their daughter was of marriageable age now, but the prospect of an early marriage looked dim. They came to meet Krishnachandra and discuss the matter.

Krishnachandra patiently heard them and assured them that he would resolve the matter soon. But he was also at his wit's end. The inexplicable bouts of unconsciousness that his son suffered from, his strange moods and activities, the cryptic prophecies of passing sages and saints – circumstances were not straight and simple. He himself had told his son many times, “Money and possessions are of no lasting value, son. What matters in life is the principle one holds dear and the ideal one aspires towards. *Vairagya*, non-attachment, is the royal road to success. If you chase your shadow, it will run away from you, but if you turn your back on it, it will follow you meekly. The world is like your shadow, so is wealth and luxury. Do not chase them. Rather a life of *vairagya* and *sannyasa*, detachment and renunciation alone is worth living.”

### **Encounter with a tantric yogini**

While studying in Nainital, Dharmendra's life took a decisive turn. He met a tantric yogini who, exploding his inner psyche, gave him fleeting glimpses of transcendental spiritual realms. Here is an account of that amazing encounter in Dharmendra's own words:

At the age of seventeen or eighteen, I had a chance encounter with a tantric yogini in Nainital. She was much older than me. At that time I had no idea what the guru-disciple relationship was about. I did not even want to be a *sannyasin*. As a carefree, school-going youth, my interests lay more in academic pursuits and sports like cricket, football and hockey. Coming from a *kshatriya* family, I carried a measure of pride and vanity as well. I believed I could do whatever I wanted. But somehow the yogini got the better of me.

One day as I was walking by the lake in Nainital, I saw her from a distance. She was sitting on a rock and like a *sannyasin* she had her *chillum*, her tobacco-pipe by her side. A few people were seated around her. I didn't pay

much attention to her and continued on my way. But she saw me and called out, “Hey young man! Come here.” I turned to look in her direction. Yes, she was calling me indeed. I wasn’t used to receiving commands. No one had ordered me about in my life.

But that woman had shouted, “Hey! Come here.” I considered this to be the height of rudeness. Her words and her tone had pricked my pride. But surprisingly, I obeyed her like a meek lamb. I quietly walked over to her. She gave me a container and said, “Go and fetch me some milk. I’d like to drink some tea.” She didn’t give me any money either.

Anyway I went to the nearby Nainital bazaar, and bought some milk for her. “Sit down,” she commanded when I had returned with the milk. Again I meekly complied. She handed me her chillum but I said, “No, I don’t smoke.”

“What!” she shouted. “When I offer something, you’d better take it.” Reluctantly I took a long, deep puff. I didn’t like it at all. I said to myself, “Tea is fine, coffee is fine, even chocolate is fine. But this chillum? This is nothing but tasteless smoke.” Yet in obedience to her command, I took a few more puffs.

There were a few other people there as well, but they were not the educated type, just illiterate villagers. She was telling them about ajna chakra, kundalini, nadis, lokas and other esoteric subjects. In those days, I used to read books written by eminent swamis and sannyasins like Swami Dayananda, Swami Vivekananda and Acharya Satyadev from the Arya Samaj. I used to read books on kundalini and the chakras. As I sat listening to her, she explained each topic in detail. Her descriptions were extremely lucid and clear.

“What on earth is she talking about?” I marvelled. I had taken her to be a boorish, foolish village woman, but her knowledge of the esoteric sciences was astounding. I looked at her. She was speaking about the brahma and the chitrini nadis. Even after I had finally returned

home, her words kept hovering in my mind. She was an extraordinary woman indeed.

I, who had been born and raised in a kshatriya family and had never accepted any order from anyone, started obeying her like a pet dog. Till that day no one had told me to do this or do that. If someone dared to do so, my reply would be, “Watch out! Who are you to tell me what to do?” I always lived like a king, commanding and ordering others about. Even if my father gave me an instruction, I wouldn’t listen to him. Once he told me to study the *Gita*. “Forget it, I won’t,” I replied. He tried to force me. I picked up a gun and aiming at him, said, “I will read it only if I want to. Please don’t speak a single word on this matter again.”

And yet I followed each and every instruction that the yogini gave me. She called me and I went to her. She told me to fetch milk and I got her the milk. She asked me to sit and I sat down. She handed me the chillum and I took it. Everything I did went against my very nature. Only after I returned home did I realize how powerful and dominating her personality was.

The next day I went to see her again and thus started a series of encounters. I would meet her every evening and she would say much the same things about mooladhara chakra, ida and pingala nadis, prana and swara which many swamis had written about in their books. Sometimes she would talk about the different branches of tantra like vama chara, kaula chara and dakshina chara. In her opinion, *vama chara*, the left hand path, was the best. This was something I wasn’t willing to digest, because if vama marga was indeed the superior path, then everyone following the natural scheme of things should be getting enlightened. But no one was experiencing any kundalini awakening, only more and more children were being produced! I wasn’t satisfied by her arguments on this point.

Once I asked her, “Where did you get all this knowledge from? Which books have you read?”

“Books?” she retorted. “I don’t even know how to hold a book!”

It was true. She was totally illiterate, and very ugly in appearance as well, fat like a buffalo and black as coal. Her body odour was extremely offensive. She never bathed or changed her clothes or brushed her teeth. Her language was very crude and vulgar. Every other sentence ended with a swear-word. Any and everyone around could become the target of her tongue-lashing. Yet she spoke on tantra, kundalini and nadis with great authority. Expounding on the different stages of self-realization, she would explain the origin of ignorance and its final dissolution. She would talk about things mentioned in the loftiest scriptures, without knowing about their scriptural origin.

“Will you teach me tantra?” I asked her one day.

“Yes,” she replied.

“Vama marga, the lefthand path?” I asked again.

“Yes.”

“Shmashan tantra, the tantra practised in the cremation ground?”

“Yes.”

“Kapal tantra, the tantra practised with human skulls?”

“Yes.”

I went up to my father and told him that I wanted to invite a tantric yogini home and learn tantra from her. “Fine,” he said, “as you wish.” I invited her to our ancestral village and soon she came. We had a beautiful cave by the river in one corner of our property and she started living there.

She had given strict instructions that no one should come that way. She would start drinking from early evening and keep drinking, smoking and eating meat all through the night. She smoked ganja in her chillum day and night, as if it were her very breath. During the day she would throw off all her clothes and sleep in the open like a huge buffalo. I think if anyone had seen her in that

condition he would have had a heart attack. So monstrous and grotesque was her appearance.

After making all the necessary arrangements for her stay I returned to Almora. A week later I went to visit her and asked, "So what is the plan now?"

"Come here at the stroke of midnight," she replied. "And don't bring your rifle along," she added.

In the jungles of Kumaon, one cannot walk at night without a rifle. Tigers, leopards, wolves and other wild animals roam all around. On that dark night I had to walk a mile and a half in the jungle without my rifle. I don't know how, but I managed to reach her cave. And that night I had profound spiritual experiences. Those experiences were not of this plane, yet they were not mere dreams. They pertained to the awakening of shakti.

I learnt vama marga from her and practised it for about six months. I would visit her every weekend and during these times I had astounding experiences. I lost awareness of my body and my consciousness soared beyond the earthly plane, where neither the sun nor the moon exists. I must have visited her about fifty times during this period. I would stay with her the whole night long and return to my home in the morning. Every night I had to drink liquor. She needed meat also, for which I had to make the necessary arrangements.

Although I underwent many mind-blowing experiences in this period, I did not lose my mental balance or sanity. I retained control over myself. I would go to school, appear for my examinations, and participate in all the other school routines. I was the class-monitor and the captain of the school team as well. I had to shoulder many responsibilities. My behaviour remained normal and I carried out all my duties in an appropriate manner.

But inwardly I was having the same experience that Kaka Bhushundi had upon entering Lord Rama's mouth. Only after reading about Kaka Bhushundi in *Ramacharitamanas* did I understand my own experience. I had the

very same experience that Ma Yashoda had when baby Krishna opened his mouth for her. I understood this when I read that account in the *Bhagavata Purana*.

The yogini gave me a transcendental experience that was beyond the limits of my body, beyond my senses, beyond my mind, and beyond all the definitions and descriptions that existed in my entire vocabulary. This experience is generally termed *shaktipat*, but she used to call it grace.

She was a very competent teacher. Her name was Sukhman Giri, and she was a sannyasini of the Juna Akhara. One day she suddenly said, “I am leaving.”

“Then please initiate me before you go,” I pleaded.

“No,” she replied emphatically, “I don’t give initiation to anyone. You will have to find your own guru.”

Then she added, “I’m the one who has given you these experiences. You haven’t earned them yourself. This is but a glimpse of the transcendental realms which an aspirant has to experience at some point in his spiritual journey. Now go and acquire these experiences on your own.”

“How?” I asked.

“Search for your guru,” she said and quickly departed.

And from that time onwards I kept searching and searching for the one who would help me regain those elusive experiences . . .

### **Radical thoughts of brother and sister**

Time was flying by. School and college, poetry and prose, friends and relatives, saints and sages, horse-riding and hunting in the jungles – all these activities continued. Dharmendra’s interests and hobbies were numerous, but now they appeared increasingly meaningless to him. A rebellious streak had developed in Dharmendra and his sister. Radical thoughts and ideas kept their minds preoccupied. They decided that they would not marry, rather they would work towards abolishing social ills like child-marriages and untouchability. They would tour all around the world,

serving the poor and the suffering, and eventually establish a new and better social order. Soon Dharmendra and his sister started spending their holidays in hospitals, serving the patients. Thus their philanthropic ideals began to take concrete shape.

Dharmendra was becoming increasingly disenchanted by worldly things. Sometimes he would study with due diligence and at other times he would stare at his books and get lost in thought. Sometimes he would gaze at the jungles, rivers and mountains around him for hours together. Sometimes he would look at the stars, sometimes he would think of worldly affairs and sometimes about Rama, Krishna and Buddha.

And nowadays he had also started thinking about sannayasa. "If sannayasa is my goal," he reasoned, "I might as well take sannayasa initiation in the nearby Vivekananda Ashram." He met the head of the ashram, who advised him to complete his studies first. Meanwhile the depth and intensity of his contemplations kept increasing with each passing day.

Dharmendra's father, being a police officer, was very busy in those days. It was the year 1940 and the freedom struggle led by the Indian National Congress was gaining momentum. His mother was one of the main Congress leaders spearheading the movement. Most of her time would be spent in rallies and agitations and the remainder in jail. Everyone in the family was leading a hectic life in those days.

It was then that Dharmendra decided to go to Benares to study anatomy and physiology at the university there. His father was very pleased. He thought that his son would finally settle down now. But the writings of fate cannot be easily erased. Dharmendra's aptitude was such that whatever he set out to do, he would finish it quickly. He completed his studies at the Benares university in six months. He was not in the least bit concerned with examinations and results. He had learnt all he needed to learn.

After returning from Benares and spending a few days in Almora, he set off again. His friend Ashwini Kumar Pant was



studying law in Benares, while K.C. Joshi was still in Almora. Both of them knew that Dharmendra was an extraordinary person. Joshi was worried on account of Dharmendra's sudden disappearance from Almora. Four months later, he received an unexpected letter from his friend. The letter had been written from the Veterinary Research Institute at Mukteshwar.

Eager to meet his old friend, Joshi left for Mukteshwar the very next day. Traversing a distance of fourteen miles on foot, he finally reached his destination. He was lucky to have arrived just in time. Dharmendra was about to leave for his village, Gaj, four miles away. After spending two days in Mukteshwar, the two friends came to Almora. Dharmendra spent a day at Joshi's home and then returned to Mukteshwar to resume his study of bacteriology.

### **Sister's demise**

While Dharmendra was studying at Mukteshwar, his sister passed away. Her demise was sudden and totally unexpected. The entire family was shattered. Dharmendra's idealistic plans came crashing down, leaving him heartbroken. The transience of life turned his mind again towards thoughts of dispassion and renunciation. The death of his dear sister had shaken him badly. He left his studies midway and brooded for long hours over his next course of action.

Nature had blessed Dharmendra with the vision of an artist and the sensitivity of a poet. An unending stream of poems used to flow from his pen under the pseudonyms of Pallav, Hridayaheen, Premi, Vahi and Nirala. The personality of Pallav was the most dominant though. Slowly Pallav had been drawn towards the eternal question, "Is there anything beyond this visible nature?" His poignant poetry was the first casualty of this all-consuming contemplation. The poet's tender mind increasingly desired the surety and solidity of the Absolute and the Eternal, realisation of which leaves nothing else unknown.

But a gust of wind came and raised a storm in the poet's heart. The longing for his lost sister became unbearable. Man

proposes, god disposes. The grand plans he had chalked out with his sister vanished into thin air. Glimpses of the future began to flash in his psyche instead. Try as he might, he couldn't make head or tail of the continuous stream of thoughts assailing his mind. His parents grew very anxious and concerned at his condition. Many relatives suggested marriage as a sure-fire remedy. The parents of Saraswati were also pressing for an early marriage. She was of marriageable age now and any further delay in her marriage would set tongues wagging. Dharmendra's father was in a dilemma. Was marriage the right choice for his precocious boy?

### **Inner turmoil**

Dharmendra was also agonizing over the same question. He had all the amenities and luxuries of a good life. There was no dearth of anything. But all worldly desires and ambitions had left him. The wheels of destiny had been set in motion. The sensitive poet was lost in deep contemplation. Spiritual currents coursed through the depths of his being, as if spiritual samskaras from many lifetimes had finally been given a chance to raise their head. Latent spiritual powers began manifesting at a brisk pace. Sometimes he would hear strange sounds, sometimes witness extraordinary scenes. Divine forces had always been benevolent towards him. A four-year-old boy sees his body clearly from outside; at the age of eight he amazes everyone with his prose and poetry in Hindi, Sanskrit and English; at the age of ten he fearlessly undertakes tantric sadhanas – such a person is certainly blessed and guided by divine powers.

Sometimes he wondered, “What does destiny have in store for me? Should I really get enmeshed in the bonds of worldly life? I'm getting an inkling of my destined path. If I follow it, but a few worldly samskaras and desires remain, will they not pull me down later? On the other hand, if I forcibly plunge myself into worldly life, will my mind stick to those worldly grooves? My path is clear – renunciation; whether I do it now or later in life like Buddha is the only question left to be resolved.

I've enjoyed all the pleasures that life can offer, gained all sorts of different experiences, but now I've no worldly desires left. The sensual life led by worldly people is treacherous and full of travails. Whatever be the nature of sensual pleasure, it can have only one outcome in the end . . .”

Dharmendra could sense that some subtle divine powers were giving him hints and help. “With these divine forces by my side,” he thought, “and actively supporting me, I must make a decision soon. I don't want to be a famous statesman, scientist or intellectual or a rich businessman or a big officer. I just want to be a true human being.”

“As a young child,” he mused, “I was like clay, and my parents cast me the way they wanted. But did they know that this piece of pottery would hardly serve the purpose of a water container?” Perhaps the master potter up there had fashioned this cup to hold nectar instead . . .”

All events and actions take place in accordance with the laws of nature. Man is powerless in their wake. Could Yashodhara stop Siddhartha in his tracks? Could Ratnavali become an obstacle in the path of Tulsidas? Then how could Saraswati become a barrier in someone's pathway to Saraswathood? One day she suddenly passed away as well. God always looks out for the welfare of his near and dear ones. He makes circumstances conducive for following the appropriate path in life.

### **Flight to freedom**

Dharmendra's reflection and rumination continued unabated. Wealth abounds, but there is no desire for it. Pleasures surround, but there is no taste for them. Respect, honour and authority, they are there for the taking, but there is no attachment to them. Erudition and wisdom have been well-earned, and are well-deserved, but there is no pride in them. If this is not vairagya, then what is? Such real and lasting dispassion arises only when the sensual desires and cravings fall away like dry petals and the inner light begins to illumine the darkest recesses of our being.

All the circumstances were now becoming favourable for Dharmendra's final severance from friends and family. His mother had been imprisoned during the Quit India struggle of 1942. By this strange quirk of fate, the shackles of maternal affection and attachment had been quietly removed from the scene. The ties of love and affection for his sister had already been broken. He had no other obligations or responsibilities. One thin thread remained, but that had just been broken by a fortuitous tug of fate. He was free now. His younger brother had passed away in early childhood. Two other brothers were studying in high school. An unseen string was now pulling Dharmendra in a different direction altogether.

The wheels of destiny are unstoppable. The pages of his life were fluttering wildly, eager to turn over to the next chapter of his life. Settling finally on his goal of total renunciation, 'Hridayaheen' let his father know about his decision.

His father tried to talk him out of his plan. "Think well before you leap. Where will you go? What will you do?"

"I shall see," Dharmendra replied. "Maybe I'll go someplace and become a sannyasin. What is there in this world anyway? You yourself used to tell me, 'Vairagya and sannyasa are the culmination of one's journey in life. I would have been much better off had I become a sannyasin and never become entangled in the snare of worldly life.' Then why do you stop me now?"

His father patiently reasoned, "Try to stand in my shoes and look from my perspective, son. Am I saying something wrong? You haven't really seen the ways of the world. How old are you after all?"

"My decision is final," Dharmendra replied resolutely. "If you really want to give me something, give me your blessings. But please don't stop me."

"Everything I have is yours anyway, Dharmendra," his father said, "but you must reconsider your decision. One should not be swayed by sentiments in such matters. One's

path in life should be chosen carefully and wisely. I'm sure you will make the right decision."

Krishnachandra was a mature and discriminating person. He had seen and been through a lot, and grown wiser for it. He did not try to frighten or threaten Dharmendra. Nor did he put pressure of any kind. Rather he reasoned with him lovingly. Deep down, he also realized that Dharmendra was not meant for the usual ways of the world. "The walls of our mansion cannot hold him in. He has loved freedom all along. He is meant to fly in the open skies, the free, feisty bird that he is . . ."

One night Dharmendra unexpectedly dropped in at the residence of his trusted friend, K.C. Joshi. He told Joshi that he had left everything. He stayed there for a day or two and then giving his friend a photo of his, he said, "I've cast my boat into the stormy sea. Let's see where it reaches. I'm headed towards Rishikesh now." And with that remark he left. Joshi was quite distraught at Dharmendra's departure but then thought, "Maybe this is what God has willed."

A few months later Joshi received a letter from Rishikesh. It said, "Dear friend, this is my last letter to you. The next letter will only come when I've become a true human being."

And the letter ended with a two line poem:

*These verses are the source of my joy, and my haunting solitude,  
A silent pyre blazes within, I'm like one possessed . . .*



# Glimpses from Gurukul Life



O jewel amongst renunciates!

Howsoever great be the joy that listeners and readers derive from hearing and reading about your outstanding qualities and deeds, greater still is the difficulty faced by the narrator in narrating them! The only wish and prayer of this humble narrator is that your redeeming name and inspiring exploits remain forever enshrined in the hearts of all.

O worshipper of truth and austerity!

May you keep on teaching the liberating science of yoga to the world, may you keep on guiding humanity on the path of truth and peace for ages to come.

*Shaanto namrasvabharvee cha shuddhavedaanta vaachakah  
Lekhako jnaanagranthanaam nibandhaanaam vidhaayakah*

O apostle of peace! You personify serenity and  
humility,  
And the timeless precepts of vedantic oneness and  
unity.  
You have imparted boundless knowledge, joy and  
delight  
Through innumerable writings aglow with the divine  
light . . .





**T**he entire gamut of creation rests on the bedrock of karma. From the tiniest ant to the mightiest god, everyone is wandering hither and thither on account of their karmas. The final goal of all beings is the attainment of eternal bliss. The desire to become free from pain and suffering lies at the core of every being, but caught in the thrall of maya, they forever remain troubled and anxious. Their emancipation is totally dependent on the grace of God, the all-compassionate Supreme Being. Only the ones endowed with unswerving devotion to Him can become the recipients of His love and grace.

Man is considered the highest among all created beings. His intelligence is his special defining characteristic. Every human being comes equipped with awareness and intelligence, yet he is unable to focus his dissipated mind towards any particular goal. Like a boat tossed about in mid-ocean, he waits for a helmsman to steer him to safety. That helmsman comes in the form of an enlightened sage. Dharmendra Singh Nayal, verily such a sage himself, is also on the lookout for his chosen helmsman.

### **Search for a helmsman**

The samskaras from countless lifetimes are guiding Dharmendra now. The spirit of yoga and vairagya is not acquired in a single lifetime. The seed of vairagya eventually becomes

the tree that bears the fruit of moksha, but it sprouts only after many lifetimes of intense tapasya. The spiritual fervour within Dharmendra was age-old and intense, which made him renounce everything. Leaving behind his mother's love and affection, his father's wealth and prestige, and his companions' friendship, he set forth on the journey that would make him the emperor of millions of hearts.

He began walking and kept on walking, crossing countless temples, mosques, gurdwara and churches on the way. He met many saints and sages, some with matted locks, others with shaved heads, some proficient in tantra, others in mantra. He stayed with them, talked to them, learnt from them and then moved on. He saw many different faces of the world, gained varied experiences, examined each and every strata of society in detail. Stopping at each cave, he tested the solidity of the rocks within, but nowhere did he find his destination. Oblivious to thunder and lightning, heat and cold, cloud and rain, he kept crossing milestone after milestone. And what was his age? Barely nineteen, when young men are still childlike in deportment, not confident enough to be independent, always looking for companions in any undertaking. For this 'child' the entire world was like his own family, and he never felt lost or lonely.

Once a mendicant told him, "Child! Fill my chillum, serve me well. You will get everything you desire." From these words, Dharmendra could gauge the mendicant's calibre. He moved on.

After talking to him, some saints would say, "We are not qualified enough to teach you. Please find someone else." One sadhu said, "Young man! Go to Rishikesh. There you'll find a suitable guru."

### **Escape from the tantric's clutches**

In the state of Uttar Pradesh itself, Dharmendra met some tantrics, who tried to lure him into their group. Dharmendra had always been interested in tantra, so he decided to play along and see what he could learn from these fellows, who

happened to be aghori tantrics. In a few days the tantrics realized that this young man would not stay long. He knew some of their secrets by now and he would soon try to escape from their clutches.

“Let us offer him as a human sacrifice to our deity,” they decided. “No one will suspect foul play and we will acquire occult powers into the bargain.” They meticulously planned all the details of the sacrifice and organized a special event for the purpose. They lit the sacrificial fire and sat around it. Together with the chanting of mantras, they were wining and dining as well.

Dharmendra got this funny feeling that he must run away then and there. The door in front of him was always locked, but today, by chance, the tantrics had forgotten to take the key. Dharmendra saw the key dangling from the lock. He mentally prayed to God and quickly stepped out the door. Locking it from outside, he headed straight for the railway station. A train was pulling out of the station just then. Without thinking twice, he boarded it.

The train brought him to Haridwar. Roaming all around the town, he gathered information and finally proceeded towards Rishikesh. There he stayed at the Kali Kamli dharma-shala. The wheels of destiny had brought him all the way to Rishikesh. Now he was only a short distance away from his final destination, and that distance, too, was about to be bridged very soon.

### **Meeting his guru**

A large spiritual gathering had been organized in Rishikesh, which was being attended by thousands of sadhus and sannyasins. His holiness, Swami Sivananda, had also come to grace the occasion. Amongst the thousands milling about, his gaze rested on one bright and spirited youth. Although the youth was nineteen years old, he looked like a fourteen or fifteen-year-old boy. The youth also looked back at Swami Sivananda in amazement and wonder. The two souls connected at first sight.

Swami Sivananda beckoned him. Dharmendra's mind had already flown towards the majestic swami, now at his signal his body too rushed towards him. "Ohji," Swami Sivananda addressed him in his usual manner of greeting, "come and meet me at Ananda Kutir tomorrow morning."

Once the rushing river bursts forth from the mountain's bosom, sooner or later it finds the ocean's shore and merges itself in its limitless expanse. In a similar manner this youth had somehow or other made his way to the doors of Ananda Kutir.

The omniscient guru looked into the depths of this youth's personality with wonder and amazement. He realized that this young man would be an ideal messenger who would spread his teachings for the welfare and happiness of many – *bahujan hitaaya, bahujan sukhaaya*. The Arjuna of Krishna, the Nara of Narayana, the one Swami Sivananda had been waiting for all along. The moment he set eyes upon the youth, he asked him to come to the ashram.

The next day, on April 19th 1943, this radiant youth, ardently intent upon the experience of transcendental consciousness and bliss, set out towards Ananda Kutir. It must have been a grand moment indeed when the youth bowed his head at the feet of the helmsman he had been searching for. Mother Ganga must have danced with joy on witnessing this momentous meeting of guru and disciple. And Mother Earth must have felt ecstatic as well.

### **Guru seva**

Dharmendra wanted initiation into sannyasa, and Swami Sivananda accepted him as a disciple. The Bhajan Hall had just been constructed that year, where unbroken chanting of the mahamantra *Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare* went on day and night. The swamis sang kirtan in two hour shifts, day and night. Dharmendra also participated in the mahamantra chanting besides cleaning utensils in the kitchen, carrying water from the Ganga, chopping vegetables,

cooking food and procuring flowers, bel leaves and firewood from the jungle. A thorough study of the scriptures started as well.

The philosophically inclined youth soon became proficient in the scriptures. Developing the qualities of self-surrender, service and self-analysis to the utmost, he quickly began to ascend the ladder of spiritual life. Although he put his heart and soul into the execution of his duties, there was no trace of ego or conceit in him.

Yet there was a strange quirk in his character. In the morning, when it was time to fill the ashram tank with water, all the disciples would gather by the Ganga and carry buckets filled with water up a flight of seventy-five or eighty steps. Hundreds of buckets had to be brought up. While the others were busy filling the tank, he would slip away to the jungle with a basket in hand and gather flowers and bel leaves for the morning pooja. And while the others would be fast asleep, he would get up at 2 or 2.30 am in the morning and quickly fill the tank with seventy to eighty bucketfuls of water single-handedly!

However difficult the karma yoga assigned to him, be it filling the water tank, cleaning utensils, cooking food, doing kirtan for six or eight hours, carrying bricks for construction jobs, grinding herbs for making medicines or serving a guest, he did it with the greatest interest and care. Others marvelled at his tenacity. Even his fellow guru bhais were amazed at his abilities. But their guru knew that the feeling of vairagya had blossomed in this youth's childhood itself. Born amidst bountiful nature in beautiful Almora, he could never be bound by the fetters of nature. Such a free soul had definitely a grand purpose to fulfil on this earth.

When a person who is contemplative by nature cries out in pain and sorrow at life's cruel sufferings, it is then that he falls into the lap of spiritual life, which takes him far, far away from this tumultuous world. Yet it doesn't make him an escapist or a shirker. Rather, by raising his consciousness to the realm of absolute truth and bliss, it fashions him as an ideal before all humanity.

Dharmendra could never get a glimpse of the source of absolute knowledge within the constricting confines of his schools. The worldliness he encountered there was not suited to his temperament and personality. And so the spiritual journey of this siddha yogi began with sublime poetry. Writing poems under the name of Pallav, he had begun searching for the limitless Absolute in the light of limited Nature.

The poetic side of his personality developed much over the years. But his personality did not remain limited to that of a poet. Sitting at the feet of his guru, Swami Sivananda, he first of all perfected the sadhana of merging his individuality in the vastness of his guru's personality. For him Swami Sivananda was divinity incarnate, verily his ishta. "O Gurudev, I have surrendered all my cares and worries at your feet" – this was the sentiment that guided his thoughts and actions all day long.

Impending events cast their shadow beforehand. Dharmendra's life was no exception. The world was looking up to Dharmendra with great expectation, for he was destined to render great service to all humanity. Dharmendra was also looking for the key to success in this grand mission of his life. And so his guru welcomed him heartily to his ashram and kept him in close proximity.

Dharmendra had a razor sharp intellect. Whatever job or duty he was assigned, he would quickly learn its means and methods, and then execute them with great skill and efficiency. His memory was exceptional. He committed many Upanishads, stotras and vedic mantras to memory. He worked in all the departments of the ashram, getting along very well with his co-workers. Everyone who worked with him was full of praise for him. He was an accomplished singer and musician as well. He would regularly participate in the evening satsangs where he would sing beautiful bhajans and kirtans from the very depths of his being, sending his listeners into moods of divine ecstasy.

### **Vow of brahmacharya**

In March 1945, on the holy day of Sivaratri, Swami Sivananda initiated him into brahmacharya ashrama, giving him the name Brahmachari Satya Chaitanya. The young and determined Dharmendra Singh Nayal broke through the bondage of maya and, assuming the name of Brahmachari Satya Chaitanya, swore allegiance to the highest Truth. He did prodigious amounts of work, but only of his own accord, on account of his extremely astute mentality.

Swami Sivananda would go to the rooms of his disciples at 3 am in the morning to wake them up. He would see what each one was doing, ask questions and give instructions regarding what to do and how to do it. It was Satya Chaitanya's habit to again go back to sleep after Swamiji's departure. But Swamiji came to know everything sooner or later. He must have thought, "If this fellow is given the responsibility of the early morning worship conducted in the Vishwanath temple, he'll get up on time and carry out all his duties in a proper manner."

But Satya Chaitanya was always a step ahead of his guru. He would get up at 2 o'clock in the morning, and put the khichari pot on the stove (in the Vishwanath temple, khichari was the prasad offered to the deity). At 3 am, loudly ringing the bells and blowing the conch, he would offer the khichari to the deity, conduct arati and sing bhajans and kirtans. After this he would go back to sleep again! Many a time Guruji tried to teach him, to make him understand, but to no avail. In the end, he sent him to cook and clean in the kitchen. Gradually he took over the entire responsibility of the kitchen, introducing much-needed changes in the cooking and serving techniques.

### **Various roles in the ashram**

On the 8th of September every year, the birthday celebrations of Swami Sivananda were conducted on a large scale. Sat-sangs and feasts went on for many days. Many visitors came to the ashram from far-off places to attend the celebrations. Thousands were fed daily. There was a lot of work to be done

all around. During the program, Satya Chaitanya would be everywhere, doing all kinds of jobs and chores. He would get inside huge pots and clean them himself. If he ever had some spare time, he would read some Upanishads or write some prose or poetry.

Seeing his academic and literary talents, Swamiji gave him tasks accordingly. Many boys and girls came to the ashram to learn the *Bhagavad Gita*, Upanishads and Sanskrit. Some talented boys from poor families also stayed in the ashram, which took care of their board and sent them to college to continue their studies. Swamiji gave Satya Chaitanya the job of teaching these children. He began teaching them Sanskrit, Hindi and English. Still he had spare time on his hands, in which he continued to write articles and poems. Then Gururji gave him permission to work in the printing press. He learnt all the different jobs in the press department – folding, binding, composing, proofreading and operating the press machinery as well. Thereafter he started translating Swami Sivananda's books into Hindi. Publishing Swamiji's Hindi books gave him immense joy and satisfaction, and he worked day and night on their translation.

In 1945, work began on the Ayurvedic Pharmacy and medicine distribution centre. Satya Chaitanya worked there as well, fetching herbs from the jungle, grinding them to make different medicines, administering them to patients and explaining all the relevant details to them. From the way Satya Chaitanya talked and conducted himself, everyone thought he was a diploma-holder in Ayurveda!

Many people commented that he had been born to fulfil Swami Sivananda's divine mission. Swamiji also loved him very much. He used to call him Satyam. There was no department in the ashram where Satyam did not work with total dedication and earn complete success.

He knew asanas and pranayamas. His body was light, lithe and energetic. He did every job cheerfully, properly and quickly. Satya Chaitanya's skills and talents are too numerous to be enumerated. His life is a role model for all sincere aspirants.



## Sannyasa initiation

On 8th September 1947, Swami Sivananda's Diamond Jubilee was celebrated. Four days later, on the memorable day of 12th September 1947, Swamiji initiated Satya Chaitanya, a cherished disciple who had immense love, affection and dedication for him, as an able successor on the path of sannyasa and sadhana. Installing him on the pinnacle of spirituality, Swamiji gave paramahansa sannyasa initiation to Brahmachari Satya Chaitanya, who now became Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Satyam received initiation into the glorious paramahansa sannyasa tradition at the mere age of twenty-four.

Swamiji's Diamond Jubilee celebrations were also going on in full swing. Two joyful events converged together at the same time, creating an indelible impression on the minds of those fortunate enough to witness them. From this day onwards Swami Satyananda completely let go of his past life associations. Striving to imbibe his guru's teachings and instructions, he set off on that eternal path, glimpses of which he had seen since childhood. Fashioning a beautiful adornment out of this amalgam of *Satya*, truth, *Ananda*, bliss and *Saraswati*, wisdom, the great guru unveiled Satyam's true nature before one and all. Swami Satyananda Saraswati is well and truly a manifestation of that Supreme Truth.

Having received initiation into sannyasa and having been named Satyananda, three distinct aspects to his life and character could be perceived; he was a devoted disciple of his guru, an efficient karma yogi and a Hindi litterateur par excellence. Whatever one says or writes about him is but a glimpse of one of these aspects.

As per the scriptural norms, Swami Satyananda had to live the life of a parivrajaka for a year after his sannyasa initiation. Following the directive of his guru, he went to live at Ramashram, Rishikesh. There he used to spend his time in study, contemplation and satsang. For his meals he would sometimes go to the Nepali annakshetra or some other alms-giving place nearby. He would always be contemplating and discussing the *Gita* and the Upanishads. Once while crossing

the bridge on the Chandrabhaga with an acquaintance, he recited the following verse from the *Gita* in a lighter vein: “*Bahooni me vyateetaani janmaani tava chaarjuna,*” and with a laugh commented, “this verse can be interpreted in an interesting way. ‘I have taken birth many times but on the 4th of June each time!’” Forty years later, in 1987, he recited the same verse with the same explanation at Ganga Darshan, sending his audience into fits of laughter.

Swami Satyananda had gone to Ramashram for a year. The workload at Ananda Kutir had increased a lot in his absence. The other swamis could not manage all the tasks he had been handling single-handedly in the ashram. Swami Sivananda had no option but to call him back.

Swami Sivananda was a prolific writer. Once he sat down to write at night, he kept on writing without a break. He would get so immersed in his writing that he would forget everything else. He would write forty or fifty pages in one sitting and they would get scattered all over the floor. In the morning, Swami Satyananda would come and gather all the pages. After finishing the cleaning and other odd jobs in Swamiji’s kutir, he would sit down to type the handwritten pages and hand a press copy of the manuscript to the press. Besides cleaning Swamiji’s kutir and typing his manuscripts, he did whatever other jobs his guru commanded.

### **Total mastery over Sanskrit**

23rd May 1948 was the holy day of Buddha Jayanti, and a big program had been organized on the banks of the holy Ganga at Ramashram to commemorate the foundation of a universal association of sadhus and swamis. Many learned saints had come to grace the occasion, including Swami Bhaskarananda and Bhikshu Mahendra. Swami Sivananda was the chief guest. After kirtan and a few addresses by the assembled saints, Swami Sivananda told Swami Satyananda, “Address the gathering in Sanskrit.” Obeying his guru’s instruction without the least hesitation, he stood up and began to speak extemporarily in flawless Sanskrit.

“Esteemed saints and devotees! It is our great good fortune that we are gathered here today on the banks of the celestial river Ganga. Everyone knows that the goal of life is nothing but *moksha*, complete and final liberation. Without liberation it is not possible to attain the state of infinite bliss, freedom and auspiciousness. Devotion to God alone grants that joy and liberation. Today, let us all come together in sincere and single-minded worship of that limitless, supreme Lord, the creator and controller of countless cosmoses, for there alone lies the path to the destination of our life’s journey . . .”

The entire audience was spellbound by his lucid and inspiring speech in Sanskrit. His address lasted five minutes but it touched the hearts of all the assembled saints and swamis. Subsequently he was made the head of the Hindi department at the ashram, and soon thereafter Swami Sivananda also appointed him as the secretary of the ashram.

### **Ideal karma yogi**

Selfish materialism is rampant everywhere in this modern age. In order to combat its growing influence, Swami Sivananda instructed his disciples to practise the sadhana of karma yoga. All his disciples turned out to be great karma yogis. Karmas are of two kinds: self-oriented or selfless. The former are done for the fulfilment of personal desires, and so their influence and scope is limited. When all personal ambitions and desires have been renounced and actions are done for the welfare of others, then alone can they be termed selfless. Such actions have unlimited scope. Being a sannyasi, Swami Satyam chose the path of selfless action, the path of karma yoga.

*Nyasa* is nothing but transcending the limited notions of mine and thine. When the prefix *sam* is added to this word it becomes *sannyasa*. Swami Satyananda followed this path to the letter. He plunged himself into ceaseless activity to spread Swami Sivananda’s divine message throughout the

world. Although every swami in Sivananda's ashram was an adept karma yogi, Swami Satyam was the foremost among them, always ready to accomplish any job, big or small, with a totally selfless attitude.

Not only was Swami Satyam proficient in karma yoga, he was extremely generous and large-hearted as well. The visitors to the ashram treated him as their friend and benefactor, discussing all sorts of matters and problems without any hesitation. Swami Satyam's vast knowledge of various subjects and the clarity and depth of his thoughts were extraordinary. His cogent and irrefutable arguments brought many philosophers and debaters to their knees. His explanations were clear, lucid and concise. And his writing style in Hindi was like the smooth, silent flow of a vast river, polished in appearance and fascinating to read.

As the secretary of the ashram, Swami Satyam managed all the different activities of the ashram. He took particular interest in the translation of Swami Sivananda's books. Swami Satyam had an amazing capacity for work. He had been appointed the press manager as well. While translating Swamiji's books, he would get so engrossed in the task that he would work the whole night, immersed in samadhi as it were. On many occasions, he kept on writing for many days at a stretch. The rich contributions that Swami Sivananda has made to Hindi literature are entirely the fruit of Swami Satyam's labours. Once Swami Satyam had remarked, "I would like to see Swamiji's books translated into every language. Not for purposes of publicity, but because they are the need of the hour in this modern age." The truth of this statement has been amply borne out. This is true *guru bhakti*, real devotion to the guru. No wonder many people used to comment, "Siva's beaming smile, jovial nature and zeal for work are fully reflected in Satyam."

Swami Satyam used to go for his guru's darshan regularly. On those occasions a wondrous atmosphere was created. He looked like his guru's shadow, like the reflection of the full moon in a crystal clear lake. His childlike nature would be

most visible at that time and it was something worth seeing. It was an indescribably sublime experience, as if instead of disciple and guru, Nara and Narayana themselves had manifested.

Swami Satyam's translation work was going on in full swing. He already possessed a flair for writing, and now his talent found full expression. His pen wrote non-stop. Days and nights merged together as he worked at a furious pace, translating books of two or three hundred pages apiece. Many magazines and periodicals were also being published in Hindi and English. He helped out with them too, writing and editing articles.

Hunger and sleep seemed to be his handmaids. They would come only when he beckoned, otherwise they would stay miles away. Things came to such a head that Swami Sivananda had to personally look after the welfare of this precocious disciple. Swami Satyam loved to swim towards the whirlpools in the middle of the Ganga at night or climb atop the rocks in the shallow sections of the river and sit for long hours in meditation. Swami Sivananda came to know everything sooner or later. He would always enquire about Satyam at night. He would send someone to find out his whereabouts and bring him to his side.

During his ashram sojourn, Swami Satyam played many roles to perfection. Personal service to his guru, serving the needy, writing, teaching, singing bhajans and kirtans and performing difficult sadhanas – he did everything with an attitude of equanimity and non-attachment. There were many Telugu and Tamil speaking aspirants in the ashram. The credit for teaching them Hindi and inculcating a sense of national unity in them goes entirely to Swami Satyam. Presenting his guru's ideas and ideals before the general public was also a prime goal of Swami Satyam, for which he made superhuman efforts.

Swami Satyam assisted in the setting up of the Yoga Vedanta Forest University and looked after the publication related tasks of that institution. After the foundation of the

Forest University Press, Swami Satyam became its all-in-all. From then on it became the seat of his ceaseless sadhana and the means for perfecting *guru seva*, selfless service to his guru. He was forever immersed in ceaseless activity, yet free from the trammels of karma, like the clouds floating freely atop lofty mountain peaks.

Swami Satyam harboured original and independent thoughts about life and religion. Seeing his total indifference towards the world but great respect and reverence towards life, together with an ardent desire for its continuous progress, one cannot label him a mere sannyasin. Regardless of one's station and circumstance in life, karma is tenable, life is tenable and one should have full faith and devotion towards life, towards the Giver of life. This sentiment best expresses the magnanimity and expansiveness that he exhibited in his nature.

Impressed by Swami Satyam's etiquette, amiability and hardiness, Swami Sivananda granted him two titles on behalf of Yoga Vedanta Forest University – *Adhyatma Ratna*, the crown jewel of spirituality, and *Pravachan Praveen*, the gifted orator, which were fitting tributes to the sterling qualities of his head, heart and hands.

### **Guru-disciple relationship**

Swami Satyam once said:

The guru is the first and foremost requirement on the spiritual path. The second ingredient is the mantra. Guru and disciple are two great energies. They are like two gigantic electric pylons, but their mutual relationship is very strange indeed. Laymen cannot understand it. Guru is not God, nor is the disciple a devotee. If you cannot become a powerful transmission line, at least try to become a small one.

Even today Swami Satyam says:

Discipleship is not child's play. Neither is gurudom. Playing the role of a guru to perfection is extremely difficult. And the duties of a disciple are harder still. Look at me for instance. I am a sannyyasin, the disciple of a great guru. When I came to live in the ashram of my guru, Swami Sivananda, I was given a room to sleep in. My nature was strange indeed. I had returned the blanket I had received from the ashram, and I used to sleep on the bare floor without a blanket. I never closed the door either as I had no possessions whatsoever. I did not even have a container or glass for drinking water. Whenever I felt thirsty I would go straight to the banks of Mother Ganga. To attend nature's call, I would go to the jungle. And I was the joint secretary of the ashram! I would study the *Gita* daily, and also contemplate its relevance to my life.

### **Swami Sivananda's practical teaching techniques**

One day, Swami Sivananda came to inspect my room. He looked inside my almirah. It was empty. The bed was also empty. "Don't you even keep a glass for drinking water?" he asked.

"No, I don't," I replied.

"Why?" he queried.

"Because I don't like to hoard and keep many things," I said.

"What! Where have you learnt all this nonsense?" exclaimed Swami Sivananda. He was a man of few words. He spoke only what was necessary. In the evening, when he went down to his kutir, he instructed that eight sets of mattresses, quilts, mosquito nets, bed sheets and pillows, eight glasses, a kerosene stove, a bottle of kerosene and packets of tea and sugar be dispatched to my room. I could not understand why all this stuff had been sent to my room. I thought perhaps my room was intended to be used as a store. So I put all the stuff in one corner and forgot all about it.

Many days later Swamiji visited my room again. He looked at everything and then asked, "Do you make use of the tea I sent you?"

"No," I said.

Swamiji put me in such a fix that I started making tea from the very next day. And I also started locking my room.

One day Swamiji came by again and asked, "Is the tea finished?"

"No," I replied, "I only make a little every day."

"Who do you make it for?" he asked.

"Myself, of course," I said.

"Arre," he chided, "why don't you call Madhavananda, Krishnananda and the others and give them tea as well?"

"What a pain!" I said to myself. "Here I was without even a single glass and now I have to make tea for two!"

When Swami Sivananda finally realized that this foolish disciple of his was completely blind to his teachings, he called me and said, "Look Satyam! There is nothing wrong in money and possessions, mattresses and blankets, tea and sugar – you can have everything as long as it is for others. Those who cannot drink tea themselves can certainly make it for others."

Then he asked, "Do you study the *Gita*?"

"Yes," I replied and added, "regularly."

"From today, stop studying that book. Rather start keeping ample money with you. Keep five rooms instead of one. Keep thirty mattresses. Give tea to whoever comes to your room. Give medicines to the sick."

"Is this behaviour suitable for a sannyasin?" I asked sceptically.

"Once you realize that through such behaviour others derive great joy and solace, your own happiness will increase manifold. That's why I say, keep everything. Keep medicines and give them to the sick, keep blankets and give them to the needy."



“That’s all very well, Swamiji,” I said, still unconvinced, “but it’s very problematic. It is very easy to fall into the trap of maya.”

“No,” said Swamiji, shaking his head. “If you want to understand the glory of seva, the grandeur of service, then this is definitely the path to follow. Others derive comfort and happiness from such acts and once you realize that, you yourself will feel happy and contented.”

From then on, my room turned into a veritable museum. One could get medicines, envelopes, stamps, pencils, fountain-pens – just about everything from my room. Someone would come to my room and say, “I need such and such a thing.”

“Sure,” I would reply, “it’s in that corner. Help yourself.”

Someone would come groaning, “Swamiji, I am suffering from a terrible stomach-ache.”

“Here, take this medicine,” I would say, “you’ll be fine in no time.”

Gradually I came to realize that renunciation doesn’t mean the abandoning of physical objects. Rather it is the abandoning of selfishness. Working for others rather than oneself is real renunciation. *Kaamyanaam karmanaam nyaasam* – ‘renunciation of selfish desires and actions is sannyasa’; now I was in a position to fully appreciate this verse from the *Gita*.

Such was the glorious nature of Swami Sivananda, who painstakingly moulded his disciples into true human beings. He would be aware of and attentive towards each and every activity of his disciples.

### **Swami Sivananda’s love and affection for his disciples**

Swami Satyam is overcome by emotion whenever he talks about his guru. He says:

What more can I say about his attentiveness other than the fact that he was aware even of the hour of my sleeping

and waking. In the initial days, I was the number one 'late-riser' in the ashram. My habit did not escape Swamiji's attention. At 3 am in the morning, I would hear the khat-khat sound of his wooden sandals as he approached my room. He would bang on my door until I woke up. Drowsily I would get up from my bed, but as soon as he left I would be back in bed!

Swamiji got wind of this and he appointed a person to sleep in my room and keep an eye on my sleeping and waking habits. It wasn't so easy to hoodwink Swamiji now, but as they say, where there's a will there's a way. I would get up early in the morning and send that person out on some errand. As soon as he disappeared from view, I would shut the door and lie down on my bed, mentally congratulating myself on the success of my plan. But Swamiji found this out as well. In the end I was forced to change my habit and now brahma-muhurta and waking up have become synonymous for me. Swami Sivananda loved his disciples as if they were his children.

Every evening a kirtan program was conducted in the ashram. It went on for two hours. Explaining the importance and greatness of kirtan, Swamiji would often talk about Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the great medieval saint. While telling stories and anecdotes from his life, he would enter a rapturous state of divine ecstasy.

The sadhana of *Lalita Sahasranam*, the thousand names of Tripura Sundari, the Cosmic Mother, would often be done all night long. Starting at seven in the evening and finishing by seven in the morning, 125,000 japas of the sacred names would be performed, Swamiji himself would stay there the whole night, doing japa and inspiring us to follow his example.

Chanting of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Mahabharata* would sometimes be conducted from dawn to dusk. We also did one hundred and eight repetitions of the entire set of Upanishads in such non-stop chanting sessions.

Twice a year we would undergo week-long mouna sadhana, observing complete silence. Actually it was hard to draw a dividing line between our karma yoga activities and such sadhanas. One effortlessly blended into the other.

Swami Sivananda cared for his disciples like a mother. During the winter season he would procure a large quantity of almonds, raisins and other dried fruits. He would have the almonds shelled and then making packets of the almond kernels himself, he would have them sent to each and every disciple's room. He would periodically ask, "You're eating those dried fruits, aren't you?" Sometimes he would suddenly appear in someone's room to find out if they were indeed consuming them or not!

### **Egodectomy**

Although Swami Sivananda was extremely caring and affectionate, he could also be very firm and rigid when it came to matters of principle and duty. Once, an old pilgrim wandered into the ashram. As per the ashram custom, he was offered prasad in the kitchen. After he had finished his meal, he got up to wash his glass and plate. But I stopped him, saying, "Leave the plate, baba. Ramdhani will wash it."

I was the kitchen in-charge and Ramdhani was a servant in the kitchen. Ramdhani always obeyed me, but that day when I told him to clean the pilgrim's plate, he suddenly exploded, "I won't clean any and everybody's dirty plates. If it doesn't suit you, please clear my account. I'll go home today itself."

His impertinent behaviour hurt my pride. I cleared his account and showing him the door, said, "Get lost right now." Before leaving, Ramdhani went to Swami Sivananda to bid farewell. Swami Sivananda learnt about the entire episode from Ramdhani and then said, "All right, Satyam might have expelled you, but I haven't. You have no reason to leave the ashram. He may certainly leave the

ashram if he likes. From today you'll stay with me and be in my personal service."

When I heard about this, I winced in agony. It was too great an insult to bear!

The next morning I went to Swamiji's kutir as usual. After cleaning his room and collecting his handwritten sheets, I sat down to type them out. After typing a few pages, my hands suddenly froze. Swamiji had written an entire poem: '*O Sannyasin, let go of your ego, your pride . . .*' Tears of gratitude rolled from my eyes as I read those words. The very next moment I got up and with folded hands, went before Swamiji. "I've committed a big mistake, Swamiji, please forgive me. Ramdhani can work wherever he wants. I'll swallow my pride and work with him."

Swami Sivananda considered ego to be the foremost enemy of a sannyasin and in order to save his disciples from its clutches he could be as stern and strict as a surgeon. Now I realize how his sternness hid an ocean of softness and sympathy within.'

Swami Satyam lapses into silence as a lump comes up his throat. His voice has grown heavy with emotion, lending an air of gravity to the atmosphere. Glory to the great guru, Swami Sivananda and glory to his equally great disciple, Swami Satyananda!

Swami Sivananda used to say, "Physical labour is also a sadhana. It exhausts one's samskaras, thereby making one's mind one-pointed." The guru is great and the disciple, born and brought up in the lap of luxury, educated in an elite convent school, now having embraced discipleship, is busy imbibing his guru's each and every word. Great indeed is the disciple as well, who climbs up and down hundreds of steps fetching sixty or seventy bucketfuls of water from the Ganga, carries heavy loads of bricks, stones, lime and sand on his back, gathers firewood, bel leaves and flowers from the jungle, walks many miles to the market and brings back a heavy

load of vegetables on his head. He who had never washed a plate in his life is now busy cleaning pots and utensils bigger in size than him. It is not easy to clean pots blackened by charcoal soot.

After all their labours, the food they got was barely enough to fill their stomachs. But the disciples treated the coarse, meagre food as nectar itself. Surviving on rice and rasam, brahma khichari and buttermilk, these young men could run around all day long doing all kinds of strenuous tasks. After a refreshing dip in the Ganga, they could stay up all night long, singing kirtan or meditating in padmasana or translating books. This extraordinary capacity for work was an outcome of the guru's blessings, and the disciples' own devotion. Mental prowess is definitely strengthened by physical prowess.

When Swami Satyam sat down to do translation work, he would not know when the day ended and night began. He would continue writing well into the next day. Then Gururji would have to intervene himself. Here is an interesting anecdote . . .

Once Swami Satyam had sat down to translate a thick book. Foregoing meals and sleep, he was writing without a break. At such times, his face would light up with an indescribable radiance. Mata Krishnananda was repeatedly telling him to take a break and eat something. But he used to be in a samadhi-like state while writing. Krishnananda noticed that for the second consecutive day, Swami Satyam hadn't got up for rest or repast. She found some milk in the kitchen and, putting it on his table, she said, "You haven't eaten anything since yesterday. Please drink this milk and then continue your writing." When Swami Satyam did not answer, she insisted, "Please listen to me and drink it quickly."

Swami Satyam was greatly annoyed by this repeated obstruction to his writing. Shouting, "Don't disturb me!" he loudly banged his hand on the table. The glass of milk fell over. Mata Krishnananda quickly left the room. Swami

Satyam's face had become red. He shut the door, tied a sheet around his head and went to sleep.

His guru bhais were greatly concerned. When Swami Satyam did not open the door despite repeated knocking, they went and reported the matter to Guruji. He immediately came to Swami Satyam's room and called out his name. Swami Satyam opened the door and bowed to Guruji. Swami Sivananda patted him on the back and said, "O Swami Satyanandaji, please come to my kutir after having your meal." And in order to ensure that he had his meal, he served the food himself and then took him to his kutir. He talked about a few general things and gave him some specific tasks. When Swami Satyam returned to his translation work in his kutir, he was again in high spirits. Such was the love and care that Guruji showered on his disciples!

The disciples would receive instructions to wash the clothes and shampoo the legs of sick patients. They had to bow before those who reviled and ridiculed them. This is the best way to liberate the soul from the knots of the ego.

### **Caring for a leper**

In the ashram, Swami Satyam's status was that of a 'spiritual servant'. He related an eye-opening incident in this regard:

The story begins in Haridwar, where the Kumbha Mela was in full swing. My worthy gurubhai, Swami Chidananda, had gone to attend the fair. Once he went to a nearby jungle to attend to nature's call. There he saw a man lying under a bel tree, groaning in agony. His body was decaying from leprosy, with flies hovering above the suppurating sores all over his body.

Swami Chidananda was greatly moved by this sight. He came running to the ashram and said to me, "Satyam, I've seen someone in a horrible condition. We have to bring him to the ashram as soon as possible. Get a big gunny sack and come with me right away." His impatient hurrying didn't give me any chance to ask questions. I followed

him and together we brought back the would-be recipient of our ministrations to the ashram.

After preliminary enquiries we learnt that earlier he had been totally healthy and disease-free. After taking a dip in the river during the Kumbha Mela, the disease had manifested in him all of a sudden. Our combined intellects were unable to correlate the bath in the river and the onset of this all-consuming disease. But a bigger question was staring us in the face. How to arrange for his care and cure? We made some rough calculations regarding the expenditure. The estimated figure reached four thousand rupees! Where would we get so much money from?

Just then we heard the khat-khat sound of wooden sandals and lo! suddenly the figure of Swami Sivananda was before us. He took one good look at us and then said smilingly, "All right, all right. Carry on with your seva." And so saying, he moved on.

Whatever we had done till now had been done without informing him. We now realized that it was impossible to do anything without his knowledge. We went to him and placed our problem before him. During the course of our conversation, he casually placed a sum of four thousand rupees before us. As if he had been ready with the money!

Now our sadhana of seva started. Swami Chidananda and myself divided up the duties amongst ourselves. But the 'divine deity' never spoke anything but abuse. A little delay in any task would result in a shower of the choicest abuse, "I was lying in peace under the bel tree until you rascals brought me to the ashram. What was the need to bring me here?"

One day Swami Chidananda was cleaning the patient's body and applying medicine. He applied a little extra pressure accidentally. Immediately the 'divine deity' hurled vulgar abuse at Swami Chidananda and spat in his face. Swami Chidananda humbly sought forgiveness for his inadvertent mistake, "I'm extremely sorry. Please

forgive me, this won't happen again." Yet the patient was furious, "You rascal, why do you touch me if you have neither courtesy nor care?"

One day as I was shaving his beard, my untrained hand slipped a bit and a little cut appeared on his face. He immediately slapped me hard across the face and let loose a volley of invective. I became extremely annoyed and went straight to Swami Chidananda. "Please take care of your divine deity yourself. I am not doing any more of this seva."

Nonetheless we continued to serve him. A person in his condition wouldn't have recovered even with years of regular and proper treatment, but he got well in only two months and then one day disappeared without a trace. No one saw him ever again. But before leaving he had said, "Everyone in this ashram is a crook. Only Sivananda is a true sadhu, and the other one is Chidananda. And Satyananda a little bit. I've seen the true colours of everyone else." What surprised everyone was that he didn't take anything with him. We never saw a trace of him again. God only knows who he was!

"This is a very interesting incident," I interjected. "I think Swami Sivananda himself was the director of this entire drama."

"Nothing is impossible," Swami Satyam remarked.

"His sudden appearance on the first day together with his remark, 'All right, carry on with your seva' and then handing out a sum of four thousand rupees for an unknown stranger supports this theory," I continued.

With a faraway look in his eyes, Swami Satyam replied, "By that time Swami Sivananda had reached such spiritual heights that the barriers of space and time were meaningless for him. Even the most surreptitious secrets of total strangers were like an open book for him. As far as the money is concerned, perhaps besides the satisfaction of serving a needy person, there was the desire to test his disciples as well."



## **Dire consequence of disobedience**

Swami Satyam continued, “Listen to another interesting anecdote . . .”

The Kumbha Mela was going on in Haridwar. People were coming and going in large numbers. I also decided to go to the mela for a dip in the holy Ganga. But Guruji commanded, “Satyam, there is a special pooja tomorrow and you are responsible for the preparation of the prasad. You won’t be able to attend the mela tomorrow.”

The child within me rebelled at this command. “Of course I’ll go,” I said to myself. “I’ll finish my duties and then go, what else!”

I started doing my chores at midnight. By early morning the prasad was ready and I slipped off to the mela . . .

As I was proceeding towards the bathing ghat in Haridwar, a big crowd of people surged in my direction and in the resulting mini-stampede my upper cloth fell off. It was such a big crowd that it was difficult to even turn around and look for something. Somehow I managed to reach the ghat. I entered the water, but that place was also jam-packed with pilgrims. Someone stepped on the corner of my dhoti. Before I could regain balance of body or control of dhoti, another large crowd surged through and lo! my dhoti also disappeared. The ignominious disrobing of Draupadi came to mind . . .

I was standing waist-deep in the water, without a stitch of clothing on my body. Rueing my fate, I remembered my guru’s remonstrations. I looked around, hoping to find some acquaintance, but there was no familiar face in sight. Looking hither and thither, I leaped out of the water and desperately trying to hide my shame, I quickly headed for the nearest tree. Some pilgrim must have lit a fire under the tree the night before. Its ash came in handy. I quickly smeared my entire body with the ash and, closing my eyes, pretended to be lost in deep meditation. “There

are so many naga sadhus around,” I said to myself. “One more shouldn’t make a difference . . .”

My ruse worked. Taking me for a great siddha naga, some pilgrims offered money and edibles at my feet. Soon the trickle became a downpour and a pile of money, fruits and sweets collected in front of me. Hours passed but no offering of cloth came my way. Suddenly I felt as if someone was standing in front of me and looking at me. When I opened my eyes, my gaze fell upon an acquaintance. He was shocked to see me in this condition.

“I don’t have time to talk now,” I said impatiently. “Quickly get me some clothes and get me out of this predicament. I’ll explain everything later.”

When I finally made my way back to the ashram, I saw Swami Sivananda standing at the gate. Perhaps he was waiting for me. As soon as he saw me, he smilingly asked, “So Satyam, how are you? You look like you could do with a change of clothes . . .”

He was laughing by now. I fell down at his feet and said, “I have paid the price for not heeding your instructions. Please forgive me this time. I shall never commit the mistake of disobeying you again.” In conclusion I can only say that his inner gaze was on his disciples every minute, every moment, guarding and protecting them.

While relating these incidents from his days in his guru’s ashram, Swami Satyam enters a different frame of mind altogether.

### **‘Sivananda Digvijaya’**

In the year 1950, Swami Sivananda embarked on a whirlwind two-month tour of the entire country. From the Himalayas in the north to Sri Lanka in the south, from Bengal in the east to Bombay in the west. His epic journey began on 9th September and culminated on 8th November. In each and every town and city on the way, he gave discourses and lectures exhorting the public to follow the spiritual path. He was

accompanied by a dedicated band of disciples, and Swami Satyananda was one of them.

Swami Satyananda wrote down a minute-by-minute account of the entire tour and published it as a book called *Sivananda Digvijaya*. This book contains minute details of each and every place that Swami Sivananda visited, the mode of transport used to get there, the different programs conducted there, and the honours and accolades accorded to Swamiji at that place. Swami Brahmananda has rightly remarked, “*Sivananda Digvijaya* is verily the fifth Veda.”

The publisher of the book has commented in the preface, “We are extremely grateful to our talented author, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, for preserving and presenting this glorious account of the historic journey undertaken by Swami Sivananda, the upholder and establisher of Sanatana dharma in the modern age.”

Earlier Swami Satyananda had amazed everyone with his superbly written biographical account of Swami Sivananda’s life, titled *Chaitanya Jyoti*. This was his second outstanding work.

### **Tributes paid by various admirers**

Swami Ramananda had the following to say about Swami Satyananda, the gifted author of *Chaitanya Jyoti* and *Sivananda Digvijaya*:

On 19th April 1943, when a young lad named Pallav prostrated before Swami Sivananda, it appeared as if a small, fast-moving stream had merged into a mighty, meandering river. In the warm, loving embrace of Swamiji, Pallav found meaning and purpose to his life. And Swamiji also found immense potential in Pallav’s personality, waiting to manifest at the opportune moment. Swamiji realized that he had found a suitable messenger to spread his message of divine life to all corners of the world. Dharmendra was like the pole star in the glittering galaxy of Swamiji’s disciples. The exploits of Arjuna and Krishna, Nara and

Narayana spontaneously come to mind when one thinks of the Herculean feats accomplished by Pallav. Truly he had an inexhaustible source of spiritual samskaras deep down in his heart.

The young, sensitive poet was named Satya Chaitanya on the holy day of Sivaratri in 1945. He took the vow of lifelong brahmacharya, pledging lasting allegiance to truth and chastity. Satya Chaitanya possessed steely determination, immense strength and irrepressible drive and energy. He excelled in the various kriyas of hatha yoga. His tenacity and dedication to duty were incomparable. Throughout the day he would be absorbed in mental contemplation upon and practical execution of the sublime teachings of yoga. Satyam's personality and influence were not restricted to the ashram. He gave ample evidence of his talents in lectures and talks before other swamis and sadhus. Most of the ashram inmates at the time were native Tamil speakers. Satyam brought Hindi to their lips, himself acquiring mastery over the Tamil language in the process. He had already surrendered everything at the feet of his guru. Whatever he did from now on was only in obedience to his instructions.

Many collections of Satyam's writings had already been published during his schooldays, some of which he had also presented to Guruji. But after coming to the ashram, he forgot all about poetry and set himself the daunting task of painting a grand portrait of his Guru in exquisite prose. That vision materialized in the form of the matchless creation *Chaitanya Jyoti*, which narrates the story of Swami Sivananda's life in the genre of a novel. While writing this book, he extensively researched the details of his beloved Gurudev's life. He scanned countless books and conducted personal interviews with scores of people who had been associated with Swamiji. Whoever has had the good fortune to read the book must have noticed the inspiring and impressive style of the author. Shorn of mystical and philosophical overtones, the book presents

its contents on the firm footing of realism. That a poet, whose imagination soared high on the wings of beauty and transcendence in the Himalayan skies of his native place, could curtail his flight and come down onto the solid ground of practical spirituality is in itself a puzzle, if not a miracle.

In 1948, the Yoga Vedanta Forest University was inaugurated and Swami Satyam was appointed the head of the Hindi department. His multifaceted talents quickly enabled him to take various responsibilities on his young but capable shoulders. In 1950 he travelled with his guru from the Himalayas to Sri Lanka and transcribed all his lectures and speeches. The credit for compiling and publishing the nectarine words of Swamiji goes entirely to this 'adhyatma ratna' Satyananda.

Today the name of Swamiji, like God's name, is on everyone's lips, and like his guru, the fame of the disciple is also widespread among all his readers and admirers. Only a patient, self-restrained and intelligent writer like him could have taken up the responsibility of writing books like *Chaitanya Jyoti* and *Sivananda Digvijaya*. The prose is so rich with layers upon layers of meaning and its style so mesmerizingly poetical that the reader is irresistibly drawn into these books. It seems as if Ma Saraswati herself is seated upon his tongue, bedecked in her finest finery. After all he is a poet from Almora, born and brought up in the lap of exceedingly bountiful nature. The reader, the words being read and the act of reading are merged into one satisfying whole by the charming cadences of his lilting language.

From a spiritual standpoint, these books rank in importance with the ancient Puranas and other scriptures. One can find the beautiful poetry of Sanskrit literature and the vast storehouse of puranic tales encapsulated in one book itself. These books are indeed meant for serious study and deep contemplation.

Besides writing, translating and publishing books, Swami Satyam was also editing the journals *Aarogya Jeevan* and

*Yoga Vedanta*. It was due to his singular dedication and effort alone that so many homes in the heartland of the country could receive the life-giving teachings of Swami Sivananda. The credit for writing commentaries on many original Sanskrit texts also goes to Swami Satyananda Saraswati.

Ashwini Kumar Pant (Aami) was in Benares University in 1950. He writes:

The young lad, Dharmendra, who suddenly left Almora seven years ago, is today the ascetic Swami Satyananda Saraswati of Rishikesh. The boy, who had astonished everyone in a little town in the hills with his unbelievable talents, is today ceaselessly engaged in broadcasting the sacred teachings of Swami Sivananda throughout the length and breadth of this country. I consider myself extremely fortunate and blessed that I got to spend the formative years of my life in the august company of this great personage.

K.C. Joshi (Nanu) writes:

I never had any news about my friend Dharmendra for seven years. I asked so many people, but none could offer any leads. In 1950 I was in Almora when I received a letter from Allahabad, sent by my good friend, Ashwini Kumar Pant. From the letter I learnt that our very own Dharmendra had become a disciple of Swami Sivananda and that he would be coming to Calcutta in September. I met him there at that time. He has indeed become a great man. My heart swelled with pride and joy as I beheld his radiant, divine personality. How fortunate I am to have spent so many years of my life with him. May he live long, may his name and fame shine eternally!

*Yoga Vedanta*, the monthly Hindi magazine of the Divine Life Society started in 1951. Miss Malti writes:

As the chief editor of *Yoga Vedanta*, the credit for compiling and publishing the teachings of Paramguru Swami Sivananda in Hindi, and thereby bringing about an awakening of the spiritual urge in the masses, goes entirely to Swami Satyananda.

Swami Satyananda's resolute and unshakable devotion to his guru was enhancing the lustre of his manifold divine qualities. He would immerse himself completely in extolling the virtues of his guru and spreading his teachings through any and every medium. His dedication, efficiency and skill in managing the publishing and printing of *Yoga Vedanta* bear ample testimony to his administrative abilities. Everyone bows in respect to a sannyasin of his calibre.

Swami Satyananda has great respect for and deep faith in ancient Indian art and culture. He is also a scientist and musician of note. Not only has he engaged himself in mental and spiritual development, he has also been very active in the sphere of physical culture. His light and lean body indicates mastery in yogic asanas. As a swimmer, he has few rivals. His guru bhais remark, "Swimming fourteen or fifteen miles using only one hand is child's play for him. He is particularly fond of swimming towards the dangerous eddies and whirlpools in the middle of the river!"

Swami Satyananda is an authority on hatha yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga and karma yoga. Yet he believes in karma yoga the most. Even today karma yoga is his favourite yoga. "Karma purifies the soul," he says, "karma is verily life itself." He is a tireless worker. Not only does he himself work with total dedication, he also knows the art of extracting work from others. There is no difference between working and resting for him.

Swami Satyananda believes that the decline and degeneration of our country is mainly due to blind, superstitious

adherence to prevalent social and religious traditions. Until and unless the materialistic mindset of a society steeped in ignorance is not changed by discarding useless dogmas and rituals, it is futile to expect even an iota of progress. In his own words, “Real religion moulds man’s life in the pattern of self-restraint and discipline. Such a person is totally self-reliant. Turning his gaze inwards, eliminating his weaknesses and shortcomings, and replacing them with divine qualities and virtues, he immerses himself in the service of suffering humanity, besides heading towards the goal of ultimate perfection himself.”

Empathy, renunciation, compassion, generosity, child-like innocence, humility, gravity, farsightedness and unswerving adherence to truth – these divine virtues find full expression in the character of Swami Satyananda. His principles and ideals are worthy of emulation. The dharma he speaks of is the need of the hour for humanity today. Also needed is a saint like Swami Satyananda who can explain what that dharma truly means.

Radhelal Sharma, a press worker, had the following to say about Swami Satyananda:

Not only is Swami Satyananda a sannyasin, but also a selfless karma yogi. All his auspicious and inauspicious samskaras have been burnt in the fire of wisdom, yet he engages himself in ceaseless karma for the sake of uplifting humanity.

Indians, Hindi-speaking ones in particular, are well aware of his sterling contribution towards the grand jnana yajna being conducted by Swami Sivananda. All the works of Gurudeva were in English. By translating them into Hindi, Swami Satyam has done a great service to the Hindi-speaking public. Besides Hindi, Sanskrit and English, Swami Satyananda has mastery over many other languages. And why not? After all, Mother Saraswati is ever sporting in his thoughts and speech. Whosoever hears his nectarine



speech even once is immediately relieved of his ignorance and nescience. Whatever doubts or problems one may bring to him are immediately resolved.

His skill in logic and argumentation has to be seen to be believed. He can speak eloquently and cogently on any subject under the sun for hours together. In his speeches, he quotes verses from various scriptures with such ease and aplomb that it appears he knows all the scriptures by heart. The *Gita* and the Upanishads constitute integral elements of his life.

*Karmanyevadhikaraste maa phaleshu kadaachan* – ‘You are only entitled to action not to its fruits’ is the life motto of this young sannyasin. Once he takes up a certain task, he does it diligently to the exclusion of everything else. He even forgets food and drink, the only thing on his mind is the jnana yajna of his Gurudev. God knows where and how this young swami learnt the ins and outs of the press trade. I have been in this line for twenty-five years and yet I keep on learning new things from him!

Mr Sharma had more to say about Swami Satyananda:

Once Swami Sivananda thought of starting and finishing a book in a single night, and he gave the necessary instructions to this precocious sannyasin. The fulfilment of Gurudev’s sankalpa became possible solely through the efforts of this adept karma yogi; otherwise finishing such a mammoth task in a single night was next to impossible. Swami Satyananda’s efficiency and skill is laudable indeed. And he has a very warm and personal relationship with the press workers, because of which they put their heart and soul in this special undertaking. *Atmavatsarva-bhuteshu* – ‘seeing one’s own self in every being’ was the ideal that Swami Satyananda preached and practised, and that principle made the impossible possible.

Gurudev was extremely pleased with the dynamism and zeal of his able disciple. Together with his blessings, he

gave Swami Satyananda the title of ‘Press stambha’ – pillar of the press. Not just me, but everyone wondered and marvelled at his efficiency, skill and intelligence. Just as Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata* had found an able scribe in Lord Ganesha, it appears that history is repeating itself in this ashram at Rishikesh – the endless writings of the Vyasa-like Swami Sivananda and their ceaseless publication by the Ganesha-like Swami Satyananda. Neither does the guru get tired of writing, nor does the disciple get tired of publishing them.

The flowering of such divine qualities in such a young sannnyasin was astonishing indeed. As the *Gita* says, such beings are yogis from previous births who come to this world to spread wisdom and uplift mankind. Blessed are the gurus who impart such knowledge and blessed are the receptive disciples who receive it.

One may win the entire world but if one doesn’t win the love of his guru, what has he won? One who approaches the guru forgetting his status, position, knowledge and pride, he alone can win everything. And this can only happen through samskaras acquired over many lifetimes. Such a person is like a rough diamond that falls into the guru’s hands. The guru, after examining him thoroughly, cuts and polishes him into a priceless diamond, which becomes the crowning glory of mankind.

Sevakram, a compositor at the Yoga Vedanta Forest University, said:

Everything that can be said about Swami Satyananda falls short of describing his true greatness. When the press was started, Swami Sivananda had appointed Swami Satyananda as the press-manager. Swami Satyam put his heart and soul into the activities of the press. His greatest qualities are his impartiality, equanimity and magnanimity. In a few days he acquired a degree of skill and expertise in publishing activities that others are not able to acquire

even after spending years in the profession. After his sannyasa initiation, as per the scriptural tradition and the instruction of his guru, Swami Satyananda went to Ramashram in Rishikesh to live as a parivrajaka for a year. Another swami was appointed in his place to manage the press affairs. The new swami tried his level best, but the work wasn't satisfactory. Many different swamis were tried out for this job. Finally a paid manager was brought in. Still the functioning of the press wasn't up to the mark. Within six months, Gurudev recalled Swami Satyam and again handed him the responsibility of the press. Swami Satyam was already the head of the Hindi and Sanskrit departments at the university, besides being the editor of the monthly *Yoga Vedanta*. Managing the press was an additional burden, yet despite all these responsibilities and duties he never looked weary or tired. It seemed as if he had an inexhaustible fount of energy within.

Swami Satyam's stamp of excellence could be seen in every inch of the ashram. Impressed by his talents, many called him the 'shadow of Sivananda'. In Rishikesh, he verily lived the life of a vedic rishi.

The ashram was a few miles away from the town of Rishikesh. Every other job required a trip to town. The ashram did not even have a bicycle, let alone motor vehicles. Rations would be delivered by jeep or van, but groceries and other articles for daily use had to be carried to the ashram on one's head.

There is no dearth of sadhus and sannyasis in Rishikesh. There are many annakshetras like Kali Kamli, Nepali and others where sannyasis and renunciates can get a meal. A *langar*, a communal kitchen, was started in Sivananda Ashram as well in 1950. Gurudev had instructed that everyone who showed up at the langar at mealtime should be fed. Sometimes even two or three hundred people would show up at lunch time. But what to speak of people, Swamiji would feed even the cats and dogs and monkeys that showed up. As

soon as the food was ready, it was put into twenty or twenty-five cups and brought in a big plate before Swamiji. All the animals would be waiting patiently nearby. As soon as he uttered the words, “Come, my lord!” they would amble up to him and he would feed each one from a cup. They would sit down and eat from his hands and after having their fill, they would scamper away. The disciples would later gather and bring back all the cups.

The karma yogi disciples of Swami Sivananda were held in great esteem by the local townspeople. Whenever they went to the market on an errand, the people would bow to them and touch their feet. Seeing the disciples’ discomfort and hesitation in receiving such honour, they would say, “We bow and offer our respects to you in the hope that when you touch Gurudev’s feet, our pranams will also be conveyed to him.”

### **Young sannyasins**

Swami Sivananda was a firm believer and follower of the ancient Indian traditions, although he did introduce changes and reforms where necessary. As per the rules laid down in the scriptures, sannyasa was reserved for the fourth ashrama, the fourth and last stage of one’s life. So his band of sannyasins was comprised mainly of middle-aged and ageing swamis. Once the ashram started and young boys started coming, they stayed on as brahmacharis. Sannyasa was given only to people over forty. No lady could stay in the ashram premises after 5 pm. Whether she was a guest or a devotee, a child or an old woman, the ashram rules did not permit a woman to stay in the ashram overnight.

Things began to change after 1940. Young men endowed with vairagya and dispassion since birth began coming to Swami Sivananda’s ashram. Soon there was a group of eight to ten such youths. Swamiji’s mission had begun to grow as well. The work kept on multiplying and these young men plunged themselves headlong into the different ashram activities – be it cooking, cleaning, carrying water, chopping wood in the jungle, gathering flowers and bel leaves for pooja

or carrying bricks and mortar for constructing buildings. The resources and buildings of the ashram also developed over time. Earlier the ashram books and magazines were printed in Delhi or Lahore. A swami had to go there to check the proofs and get the books printed.

This band of eight or ten young men in the age group of twenty to twenty-five years had arrived more or less at the same time. All of them were workaholics, willing to work day and night. After a day of hard labour, they would chant from the Vedas and the Upanishads at night. Whatever they got as bhiksha, they ate with delight. They didn't have beds or mosquito nets, yet they slept soundly. Even if snakes and scorpions crawled all around them, they were protected by the guru's unseen hand. It seemed as if the gods themselves had descended in human form to set an example of vairagya for others to follow. They were all boys from well-to-do families, all were well-educated graduates, and they were all interested in sannyasa.

Guruji was not in favour of giving sannyasa to these young boys. But they insisted, saying, "Guruji, you give sannyasa to old people who have retired from the world. They are tired and worn-out people who cannot do anything for society. They are interested only in their own salvation. Living on the banks of the Ganga in their guru's ashram, they turn the beads of their rosaries all day long until one day it falls from their lifeless hands. Give sannyasa to us instead. We will achieve something worthwhile for society. We will take your message to every nook and corner of the world. We can crush mountains to dust and change the course of rivers at your bidding. Facing thunder and storms, we can traverse oceans and continents, bring heaven and earth together. You yourself have said many times, 'The world today doesn't need the hermit of the jungle. He must leave his secluded cave and move across the length and breadth of the land for the welfare of the suffering multitudes.' We want to do many things, but what can we do until and unless we receive your blessings?"

The insistent entreaties of these young boys forced Guruji to reconsider his decision. In their eyes, he saw the gleaming sparkles of a bright future. Finally he initiated them into the purifying blaze of sannyasa that they may set a worthwhile example for the entire world.

Gurudev told the newly initiated sannyasis:

God is omnipresent. He lives in the innermost core of your being. He is in every object, big or small, animate or inanimate. Your existence is but one of His manifestations. I bow down in awe and reverence to that adorable, almighty God. May His blessings and grace be upon you and may you acquire a heart filled with devotion, a pure and sublime intellect, a calm and steady mind and restrained senses. May you live like the free spirit that you truly are, radiating the dazzling splendour of the atma within. Plunge yourself into selfless service. You will become a beacon of peace, love, hope and unity. Your wonderful thoughts, words and deeds will spread peace, happiness and prosperity throughout the world. You will shine like rishis and jivanmuktas in all your glory. May peace reign in the whole world and every human being foster love in his heart. May all of you live long, may God's grace always be upon you and may you acquire peace, prosperity and unalloyed bliss.

It is hard to say who was more blessed and fortunate, the radiant young sannyasins who received sannyasa or the guru who gave it to them. Both were equally great, as if they were gods incarnate. Like Shankaracharya, Guruji would teach his disciples the salient teachings of the Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, *Gita*, dharma and yoga. The disciples would take his each and every word to heart, and imbibe his every teaching in their lives. Forgetting themselves, they merged themselves completely in their guru, as if they were the rays of light around the sun-like guru. No work of the ashram was too small or petty for them. Each and every task had its own worth and importance.

The young sannyasins had to go to other towns for the printing of books and magazines. They would stay there and return only when the job was done. The printing of Hindi books was Swami Satyananda's responsibility. In 1947, Swami Satyananda had gone to Lahore to get a certain book printed. He was staying in the printing press itself and continuously working on the book. Just then rioting broke out between Hindus and Muslims. The rioting frenzy quickly got out of hand. The press was hurriedly locked and the employees ran for their lives. Swami Satyam was locked inside. The room upstairs was filled with paper clippings and cuttings. Whenever he heard people's voices, he would go to that room and, sitting there, remember his guru and chant the name of God.

The next day the press watchman managed to sneak in unnoticed and brought him some tea and sugar. There was already a stove in the press; he left some kerosene for it as well. Locking the press from outside, he left. Inside Swami Satyananda would either make some tea or just eat some sugar and pass his time in japa and meditation. It was only a week later that the military arrived and the situation came under control. The watchman told them about the swami holed up in the press. They rescued him and sent him back to India in their own vehicle with an armed escort.

### **World Parliament of Religions**

In 1953, Swami Sivananda organized a World Parliament of Religions on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of April in Rishikesh. The entire event was managed by his disciples, who took on all the responsibilities. Among them Swami Satyananda's contribution was invaluable. People saw him everywhere, in every role, doing every kind of job. The special issue of *Yoga Vedanta* brought out by Swami Satyananda to commemorate this historic event is worth reading even today. Whoever came in contact with Swami Satyananda was overjoyed to meet a sannyasin, poet and saint of such high conduct and calibre. They expressed the hope that through his efforts not only

would the field of Hindi literature be greatly enriched, but the science of the spirit would also gain its rightful position as the supreme science. Everyone felt that the age of Adiguru Shankaracharya had returned.

Thousands attended this grand event. Many of them told Swami Sivananda that they would like to organize yoga shivirs, conventions and eye camps in their respective towns and cities. They requested him to send swamis from his ashram for the same. Soon many of them started organizing such programs and the invitations started pouring in.

The ashram had expanded and developed a lot in the meantime. The bhajan hall, the temple, the printing press, the library, the post office, the dispensary, the kitchen – all these had been built in the ashram by now. Yet the construction work continued unabated. Hundreds of books had already been translated into Hindi and published. With the commissioning of the press, the publishing of books had become much easier. Many books had also been translated into Gujarati. Translation into other Indian and foreign languages was going on at a swift pace.

### **Conventions and camps at different places**

Soon Swami Satyam began to visit different camps and conventions. He had acquired some knowledge of medicine during his college days and in the company of his guru had also gained experience in conducting minor surgery and dispensing medicines. Swami Sivananda began sending Swami Satyam to the eye camps being organized in different places.

In October of 1953, Swami Satyananda went to Gujarat to attend the Patan eye camp. Ratilal Shah, the organizer of the eye camp, wrote:

Swami Satyananda had come to participate in the Patan eye camp. He stayed here for ten days and I benefited a lot from his company. He would deliver satsangs in the mornings and evenings. Every day before sunrise he



would go towards the nearby jungle for a walk. Often I would accompany him and during these early morning conversations I would get a glimpse of the depth and maturity of his extraordinary personality.

Once I was hotly discussing the monistic philosophy with Swamiji. Presenting what I believed to be forceful and convincing arguments, I emphatically declared that the monistic doctrine could never be proven or established.

“I’m here for an entire week,” Swamiji remarked in a calm but serious tone. “Through logical arguments I can easily establish the validity of the monistic world-view. But this would be mere intellectual gymnastics. The real and practical meaning of monism is unconditional, selfless love. Loving each and every being of this creation gives birth to true monism. Seeing the entire animate-inanimate world through the lens of unity and moulding one’s life accordingly is the true message of monism. Try to understand and imbibe this subtle message. Leave the arguing for vain pundits and philosophers.”

This novel interpretation of the monist philosophy greatly inspired me and I felt all the more reverence for Swamiji. If the whole world would understand and adopt this path of oneness and unity, there would be so much more peace and happiness everywhere.

I wish a long life for Swami Satyananda, the shining exponent of monism and the very embodiment of vairagya. May he spread his message of universal love and unity, may he progress on his path towards wisdom and transcendence.

Whether Swami Satyam stayed in the ashram or travelled outside, whoever came in contact with him became his ardent admirer. No one could ever forget him. Initially Swami Sivananda was reluctant to send him to outside camps and programs. Even if Swami Satyananda expressed a desire to go and serve in these camps, Swami Sivananda

would parry his request. Sometimes he would say, “Satyam, I think the environment outside is not suitable for you. You are such a workaholic that you forget everything other than your work, including yourself. This has an adverse effect on your health.” At such times, one could catch a glimpse of paternal love and affection in the deep, dark eyes of Swami Sivananda.

Gradually he started sending Swami Satyam to such outside events and engagements, but he would explain each and everything very carefully to him and would instruct the swami accompanying him to be extra cautious about his diet and rest. A few old swamis of the ashram often remarked that Swami Sivananda had grown overly fond of and attached to Satyam. That’s why he would get so worried over his outside trips!

Towards the end of 1953 Swami Satyam had gone to Udaipur. Bhairav Lal writes about his visit:

The Udaipur branch of the Divine Life Society had organized a sadhana camp during which I had the good fortune to come in close contact with Swami Satyananda.

His sublime and inspiring lifestyle made me wonder as to how this gifted young man could renounce worldly wealth and comfort and embrace the life of a sannyasin. But how long can a diamond hide itself amongst pieces of coal? It is the wish of God Almighty that through this lustrous diamond, the light of divine knowledge and wisdom spread throughout the world.

During the Udaipur convention Swami Satyananda spoke time and again on the ways and means to sublimate and transform one’s mundane life into the life divine. His inspiring words left an indelible impression on my heart. Whichever subject he spoke on, he would bring it to life with his forceful speech and charismatic personality. After the Udaipur program, I was fortunate to travel with him to Ajmer and be of service to him. The lessons that I’ve learnt from his dynamic yet calm

demeanour and divine lifestyle shall forever remain fresh and alive in my heart.

In this manner, Swami Satyam's travels kept on increasing. He would be so engrossed in working for his guru's mission that he would be totally oblivious to other matters. Guru and disciple, though physically separate, were one in spirit, thought, deed, duty and sentiment – *Satyam Shivam Sundaram, Tattvamasi, Aham Brahmaasmi*.

### **Thirty-first birthday**

Paramguru Bhumandaleshwar Swami Sivananda decided that the thirty-first birthday of 'Jnanayajnopabhrith Rajayogi' Swami Satyananda Saraswati be celebrated in a grand and special manner. A souvenir volume was also planned to commemorate the occasion. Soon the plan turned into reality. Swami Sivananda named the souvenir *Swami Satyananda – His Life and Work* and wrote the following words of benediction for this souvenir:

*Few would have such vairagya at such a young age. Swami Satyananda is full of the Nachiketas element. Yet any work that he takes up he will complete in a perfect manner. He does the work of four people and yet never complains. He is a versatile genius and a linguist too. Yet, he is humble and simple – an ideal sadhaka and Nishkamya servak. He is a pillar of the Divine Life Mission.*

*May God bless him with health, long life, peace, prosperity and eternal bliss.*

—Swami Sivananda

26 July, 1954

'Bhakti Yogi' Swami Chidananda shed light on his life and deeds as well. 'Vedanta Kesari' Swami Krishnananda and other guru bhais also wrote glowing tributes based on their own personal experiences with Swami Satyananda.

‘Upanishad Brahma’ Swami Jyotirmayananda wrote:

*Once whilst in flight, gliding majestically  
over the deepest recesses of endless space,  
the rare Homa bird laid its eggs.  
Even as the eggs fell into the fathomless akasha,  
chicks emerged and fluttering their tiny little wings  
flew into the void, crying out for their mother.*

*There was one, however, who took a different path.  
This lone harbinger came down to the mortal realms  
to spread the message of immortality and light;  
He was called Satyam – Swami Satyananda Saraswati.*

We are celebrating the thirty-first birthday of this great soul. May he live long by God’s grace. May this immortal bird of the free skies sing his eternal song of freedom for ages to come!

What an accurate description of Swami Satyam!

Two of Swami Satyananda’s compositions were also included in the souvenir. Both of them are highly inspiring and rich with meaning. Swami Sivananda gave them the status of spiritual sentries by placing them at the very beginning of the book. The first one is titled ‘I am a Sannyasin’. It is a long poem, which was subsequently republished in *Yoga Vedanta* and later in *Yoga Vidya* as well. An extract from the poem is presented here:

*I am a bird of the endless sky  
I am the ceaseless flow of nectar  
I am tranquil eternal bliss  
I am the luminous star of joys.  
Go away tears, grief and sorrow,  
the prison of pain has been destroyed.  
Wherefrom thorns on the path now,  
my path is bedecked with flowers.*

An extract from the other composition, 'I am Taller than the Temples' is:

I prefer to dwell in the walking and talking temples of everyday life. I am the protector of Truth eternal. My hand is always raised in blessing wherever man has purified his soul, wherever he has lit the lamp of wisdom, burnt the incense of virtues and rung the bell of pure thoughts in his inner sanctum sanctorum. Do thou become a temple where I can always inspire and guide you from untruth to truth, from mortality to immortality, from darkness to light, and from destruction to regeneration.

This 250-page volume is filled with tributes and benedictions in English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Garhwali, Gujarati, Marathi and Tamil. All the acquaintances and well-wishers of Swami Satyananda have expressed their innermost sentiments and offered their best wishes for the onward journey of this great saint.

Handsome tributes were also paid to the parents of such a stalwart sannyasin. A small article, 'The Real Offering', written by Swami Sivananda Krishnananda, a guru behan of Swami Satyam, appeared in *Yoga Vedanta*:

The fresh, fragrant blossoms, untouched by the rays of the morning sun, with glistening dewdrops poised precariously on their wispy petals, are really the ones worth offering to God. The gardener who plucks them before dawn and offers them to his deity makes a worthy offering indeed.

Likewise a few wise gardener-parents take their dearest child in the morning of his life, when he is yet untouched by the pleasures of the world and is imbued with immense light, power and wisdom, from the garden of their secure home and offer him at the lotus feet of their divine guru. This is real surrender, this is real sacrifice. In it lies the key to success. When the very same hands that watered

and nurtured the tiny little seedling offer the young and strong sapling to the guru, that is the real offering. Blessed are the parents who make such an offering, twice blessed is the offspring who's offered and thrice blessed is the guru who receives the offering.

Dharmendra's parents knew that he had become a sannyasin and was currently living in Swami Sivananda's ashram. They had even written two letters to the ashram to which Swami Sivananda had replied personally. Dharmendra's father, Krishnachandra Nayal, was a kshatriya landlord from the hills of Kumaon. The Kumaonis are a proud and headstrong race. Dharmendra's father had also inherited these traits, which had lent a certain hardness and stubbornness to his character. Being a police officer, he was wary of sadhus and sannyasins. Besides, there were the old traditions and superstitions that held sway over the local people. That is why educated boys and girls often turned rebellious and sometimes committed rash, impulsive acts. In such circumstances, the parents would rather reject and disown the children than lose their honour and pride. In spite of being cultured and educated, Krishnachandra could not become an exception to this rule. Despite being an Aryasamaji and a sattwic, noble-minded person, he remained aloof and distant from his children all his life.

His second son, Bhupendra Nayal, became a leader of the revolutionaries during the independence struggle. He was eventually shot dead by the police in Calcutta in 1947. His third son married a Muslim girl and took charge of all the ancestral land and property. Everyone had come with their own set of samskaras. Regardless of his attitude towards his children, Krishnachandra Nayal is worthy of our respect and reverence. Many generations will remain indebted to him for the priceless gift he has left in the form of his eldest son.

The head nun of the Nainital convent, who had grown very fond of Dharmendra, came to visit him twice in the Rishikesh ashram. The two childhood friends of Swami

Satyam, Ashwini Kumar Pant and K.C. Joshi, had also sent their reminiscences for the souvenir. The two had come to Calcutta in 1950 while he was accompanying Swami Sivananda on his All-India Tour.

Ghanshyam Shastri sent his best wishes from Almora. His letter was written in Garhwali and Swami Sivananda had it published as is. Here is a translation of the letter written by an elderly acquaintance of Swami Satyam:

It is a matter of great joy that we are today celebrating the birthday of a dispassionate young sannyasin. Sannyasins themselves don't need such celebrations, but it gives great happiness and inspiration to the people who celebrate and pray for them.

This young ascetic from Koormanchal was born in a little village in the district of Almora thirty-one years ago on 25th December 1923. His father was well-educated and well-off, and they lived in great comfort and luxury. There was no dearth of anything. No stones were left unturned in his upbringing. The family was religious in bent and he received the same kind of training – hearing tales of ancient bhaktas, worshipping Lord Shiva, chanting the *Gita*. His father was an Aryasamaji, so he learnt how to perform havans and yajnas as well. He was sent to a good English-medium convent school where he topped all the subjects, with the exception of mathematics. He excelled in many sports and games as well. Having distinguished himself at school, he eventually returned to his native town.

Greatly agitated by the noise and chatter of the world, one day he suddenly left his home in search of everlasting peace. After visiting many ashrams and places of pilgrimage he finally arrived at Rishikesh, where he met the world-renowned Swami Sivananda. Readers are well aware that in this modern day world steeped in materialism, he is the only saint spreading the message of dharma and spirituality. Our young man from Almora fell at the feet of Swami Sivananda.

Seeing his hidden potential, Swami Sivananda accepted him into his fold. He initiated him into sannyasa, giving him the name Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Swami Satyananda is fluent in English, Hindi and Sanskrit. From a young age, he has been writing beautiful poems and essays. Working in the Hindi department of the ashram, he has been editing the Hindi monthly *Yoga Vedanta*, and translating many of Swami Sivananda's books into Hindi. He has also written many books himself, amongst which *Chaitanya Jyoti* and *Sivananda Digvijaya* are well-known to readers.

Besides working in the press in the capacity of editor and overall manager, he is also proficient in bhajan, kirtan and meditation. He has a special talent for making and dispensing medicines. Though extremely gifted, there is no trace of pride in his personality. He treats everyone with warmth and affection. His words are powerful yet sweet. His life is devoted to the upliftment of all mankind. In the end I can only pray for his good health and long life.

Congratulations and best wishes poured on Swami Satyananda Saraswati from all sides. Thus did a grand event begin and culminate as per the wish and vision of Swami Sivananda. The saga of the guru's generous grace and the disciple's selfless surrender travelled far and wide. Swami Sivananda's name and fame had spread throughout the country and the world. Many branches of the Divine Life Society had already started in different places. Now their activity gathered even greater zeal and momentum.

The radiant joy and light that was generated by this grand event in Ananda Kutir continues to spread everywhere even today. That light is the magnanimous grace of Gurudev Swami Sivananda, a reservoir of immense power and energy, who meticulously planned the birthday celebrations of his cherished disciple, Swami Satyananda, and himself participated in them with great joy and enthusiasm. It is clear that his grace and blessings were always with Swami Satyananda.



## **The shining star of Ananda Kutir**

Having received everyone's good wishes and the blessings of his guru, Swami Satyam was shining like the full moon of Ananda Kutir. Work throughout the day; translation, study and sadhana throughout the night – this was his daily routine. His body, though physically frail, shone with an inner radiance that amazed everyone. Whenever he spoke, everyone hung on to every word that escaped his lips. At the height of the Himalayan winter, during the cold nights of December–January, amidst the deafening noise of the press machines, whether it be midnight or 2 am in the morning, one could suddenly hear the notes of the tanpura from the room opposite the press (Swami Satyam's room). If anyone happened to peep into his room out of sheer curiosity, he would see piles of books lying all around the room. On the desk would be innumerable letters, papers, photographs and press cuttings lying under numerous paperweights. And in the middle of them all would be an open book. Even in the middle of all this work and at such an unearthly hour, his deep study of the Upanishads continued unabated!

It is a matter of great wonder and amazement that despite being born and brought up in the lap of luxury, Swami Satyananda was leading a life of such renunciation, austerity, and dynamic activity; and even in the middle of all this incessant activity he could keep his interest in the Upanishads alive and continue his sadhana of serious study. His life is indeed an epitome of sadhana. He has truly realized the dignity and greatness of the *karmanishtha vairagya*, the dynamic dispassion, that the guru cloth idealizes. He has well and truly lived up to its glorious ideals. His life is indeed a harmonious blend of karma, jnana and bhakti.

Talent has two wings which allow it to take full flight – endeavour and tenacity. Both these wings of Swami Satyananda were strong and able. He was forever engaged in acts of service, the practice of yoga or discussions on spiritual topics. He would frequently and fluently quote from the *Gita*, Upanishads, *Brahma Sutras* and the slokas of Shankaracharya.

To Swami Sivananda, he was dearer than life itself. He obeyed his guru's instructions and teachings to the letter. That is why today he is the centre of everyone's attraction. The grace of the guru alone is the support and strength of the disciple.

*The guru is the potter and the disciple the pot,  
Meticulously does he remove each and every fault.  
One hand inflicts ruthless blows from outside  
While the other solidly supports from inside.*

Such are the mysterious ways of the guru. Through his grace, the disciple eventually becomes a fit receptacle to receive the divine nectar!

Whenever Swami Satyam went to camps and shivirs, he worked tirelessly without any rest. In the eye camps he would be so busy in the surgeries that he wouldn't know the difference between day and night. "This needs to be done, that needs to be done," was his constant refrain and he never rested. On his return to Rishikesh, Swami Sivananda would be greatly distressed to see his frail constitution. He would tell him to rest and give him a special diet of milk and fruits. "Stay inside your room, don't talk to anyone, you must have complete rest," would be his strict instructions. Later he would say, "That is why I never send you on outside programs. You are so careless about your health."

In January 1956, Swami Satyananda was invited to conduct programs in Maha Gujarat and Saurashtra. The programs were to be held in sixteen cities, from the second week of January till the second week of March. He was accompanied on the tour by Swami Bhumananda, Swami Shantananda and Sri Manuvarya. The programs were very well received by the public. Reports of the program and transcripts of his lectures began pouring into Sivananda Ashram, where they were printed in subsequent issues of *Yoga Vedanta* under the title 'Manas Muktavali'.

Great avatars like Lord Buddha have appeared on this earth from time to time. Whether we call them avatars or messengers of God, they are verily an expression of God's

energy and grace, who give a new ray of hope to the suffering multitudes in every corner of the world through their spiritual currents and thoughts. Swami Sivananda is the great avatar of this age, who is an embodiment of God's mercy and compassion. Now one of his young ascetic disciples has decided to take his mission to its final conclusion. It is his resolve to make all those beings, who have forgotten their true nature and are wandering amidst the tinsel pleasures of this world, realize their real nature. Seeing this young tapasvi sannyasin, one cannot but come to the conclusion that the Creator has sent him to this world for the fulfilment of a grand plan.

By the grace of God and the blessings of his guru, he has received the gift of golden speech from Mother Saraswati, silvery calmness from the moon and dazzling radiance from the sun. Becoming an efficient medium of his guru, he spread his spiritual message in every nook and corner of Gujarat. Having liberally doled out the liberating teachings of Swami Sivananda in the big cities and small villages of Gujarat, Swami Satyam returned after two months to the feet of his beloved Gurudev. Embracing his dearest disciple in the warm fold of his all-encompassing grace, Gurudev showered his choicest blessings upon him. Both guru and disciple are blessed indeed!

### **Departure from guru ashram**

One day Swami Sivananda called Swami Satyananda and said, "Satyam, you have worked day and night for the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh. If you remain here any longer, you will become a bonsai. You must leave this place now, it is proving to be too small for you." He gave Swami Satyam one hundred and eight rupees and said, "Keep on adding zeroes to the right of this figure. That's all you have to do."

"I am ready," replied Swami Satyananda resolutely.

That very day Swami Satyananda had completed twelve years of ashram life. Swami Sivananda took him to his sadhana room and in ten minutes imparted the experience of kriya

yoga. Both guru and disciple were competent and capable. They were like Nara and Narayana, man and God. Blessed is the guru's greatness and the disciple's gift of receptivity.

Swami Satyam bowed to Gurudev and then left the room. Packing two dhotis in a bag, he left the ashram immediately. He arrived in Delhi where he received help and assistance from Sivananda Sivanjali (Muktarani Bhatnagar) and Hanuman Prasad Mathur. Soon programs began to be arranged for him in and around the city.

In the ashram, when his guru bhais came to know of his sudden departure, they felt his absence acutely. But being sannyasins they retained their composure and without succumbing to sentimentality went on with their assigned duties.

Later on Swami Sivananda made the following remarks to the ashram inmates:

Has anyone managed to stop a river from flowing or the sun and the moon from rising, that I could have stopped Satyam? He has a lot to accomplish. He is my real successor. Most disciples are not at all devoted to their guru, and of the remaining few, most are blind in their devotion. After the guru's demise, their boat also capsizes. But Satyam is that luminous flame which will go on spreading the name of Siva and the light of his teachings throughout the entire world. Swami Satyam is satyam indeed in word, thought and deed.

Glory to Sivam and Satyam! I offer heartfelt obeisance at their blessed feet!

Having experienced the evanescence of earthly objects from childhood itself, having broken the shackles of pleasure, desire and ego like Lord Buddha, Dharmendra had begun a journey in search of the eternal, the absolute, the blissful, and this journey had finally brought him to the holy feet of Swami Sivananda . . .

Spending twelve years in the sacred presence of his guru, purifying himself in the fires of austerity, this young

sannyasin, radiant with the knowledge and wisdom imparted by his guru, and equipped with his blessings to conquer the entire world, set out on the noble mission of fulfilling his guru's mandate. Loudly proclaiming, "I am a sannyasin," he set forth towards his goal of uplifting humanity from the depths of depravity to the heights of divinity.



# Glimpses from Parivrajaka Life



I consider myself very blessed and fortunate to have seen the source and sustenance of my inspiration, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, from such close quarters. He is not merely my guru, he is verily my God. Blissful and serene, yet at the same time, vibrant and dynamic, his life continues to inspire me on the spiritual path.

The task of compiling my guru's life history and presenting that veritable *Guru Gita* to disciples, devotees and laymen alike is challenging and arduous to say the least; nonetheless the grace and assistance of Lord Ganesha and Mother Saraswati are with me, and with my guru's blessings, this endeavour of mine will definitely bear ample fruits.

In the words of Swami Ramananda:

*I am but a tiny token  
of the Truth you are the embodiment of . . .  
I am but a tiny fraction  
of the Absolute you keep searching for . . .*





Satyavrat and Basanti Srivastava from Rajnandgaon (Nandgram for short) had travelled to Rishikesh to attend the World Conference of Religions organized from 3rd to 5th April 1953. They were greatly impressed by Bhumandaleshwar Swami Sivananda and his band of dedicated disciples. Three days of satsang and saintly association completely changed the course of their lives. They beheld Swami Sivananda as a Jagadguru, a fount of magnetism and energy, while Swami Satyananda seemed like a long-lost loved one. After spending four fateful days in Rishikesh, they returned to Nandgram, but it seemed as if their heart and soul had remained behind in Rishikesh. They had brought many books and magazines from the ashram, and during the coming months they would remain engrossed in reading them. Soon they began corresponding with Swami Sivananda. Satyavratji requested him to send a swami during the forthcoming Ganesha festival to conduct satsangs and classes.

Soon a reply came from Swami Sivananda: “Your state of Madhya Pradesh is a Hindi-speaking region. There is only one Hindi-speaking swami in our ashram right now – Swami Satyananda. I will send him as soon as it is feasible.” Reading the letter, they felt as if their choicest boon had been granted.

However, Swami Sivananda’s birthday celebrations lasted a week after 8th September, and Swami Satyananda was unable

to come for the Ganesha festival in Nandgram. Later on another program was organized for which all the necessary arrangements were made, but again he could not come.

In April of 1956, Swami Satyananda was in Delhi. Gurudev Swami Sivananda told Mata Krishnananda, "Write a letter to Satyavrat informing him that Swami Satyananda is now a parivrajaka and is currently staying in Delhi. Satyavrat can write to him and invite him to his town. Attach Swami Satyananda's contact address in Delhi as well."

As soon as he received Mata Krishnananda's letter, Satyavratji immediately wrote to Swami Satyananda, inviting him to Nandgram.

Swami Satyananda replied from Delhi:

Whatever Satyam has learnt and understood by the grace of Gurudev is guiding him on the path he has chosen. With the dawn of self-awareness, the first thing that Satyam did in life was to mould an independent personality for himself. Buddha's life inspired him to take sannyasa, and now he has realized that he alone has to traverse the path he has chosen for himself.

For twelve years, I was in Sivananda Ashram. There also I had the independent nature and character of a sannyasin. Now I am outside the ashram, but I still have my own way and personality. I do not want to meet and socialize with people under the pretext of spreading beloved Gurudev's teachings. And yet that's what is happening.

My thoughts, words and deeds are transmitting the lofty message of Swami Sivananda, but wherever I go, I will go as a lone sannyasin, not as the representative of any institution.

At face value I am Swami Satyananda Saraswati of Rishikesh, but in reality I am just an insignificant disciple of Swami Sivananda. From my own platform I shall sing the songs of Gurudev and cast his teachings into a practical, universal form. The priceless gift that Gurudev has given for pacifying the sufferings of many will be my

inspiration and method of operation. The doors of every institution shall ever remain wide open for me. Which village or town or city to travel to next, I do not know. All I know is that I have to travel. Wherever I am directed I shall proceed. I have neither planned nor pondered over this matter nor shall I ever do so in the future.

I have set forth with the blessings of revered Gurudev. Where I will go, when I will go, I know not. I have no fixed programs. They are arranged wherever and whenever convenient. I am getting a lot of help and support from Hanuman Prasad Mathur and Muktarani (Sivanjali).

Your town is called Nandgram. Deep down in my heart, I find a great affinity and attraction for Nandgram. Now that you have invited me there, I shall definitely come. I am getting an inkling that my work and mission shall begin from there. Nandgram shall verily become my Sarnath. I am Satyam and you are Satyavrat. You are the personification of my resolve, my *vrat*.

I am a lone traveller. Parivrajakas wander alone. If a parivrajaka joins a group, then his purpose of wandering is not served. The life of a parivrajaka has a twofold purpose: strengthening one's personal sadhana and spreading the wisdom and knowledge gained from that sadhana. These goals can only be accomplished if he remains by himself. Travelling with a band of sannyasins, he fulfils only the latter goal; he ends up as a preacher instead of a parivrajaka, his personality lacking the strength and endurance that can only come from sadhana. Satyam belongs to the former category of parivrajakas.

Soon another letter arrived from Swami Satyam:

Received your letter, as well as the money-order. I have had to accede to the local people's request to give a discourse on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti. Their program has also been published. So I will only be able to come after 23rd May.

Buddha Jayanti, the day of Buddha's birth and enlightenment, is celebrated with great joy and gusto everywhere. But does anyone bother to remember Yashodhara, the wife of Buddha? People seem to have forgotten that without Yashodhara, Buddha would have remained incomplete. Yashodhara's sacrifice was far greater than Buddha's. Buddha's sadhana had a self-oriented goal, whereas hers was totally selfless. He walked till he reached nirvana, whereupon he stopped. But she trod upon an infinite path, where she kept on walking and walking.

In the life and deeds of Buddha we find doubts, uncertainties and a certain incompleteness. On the other hand, the austerity of Yashodhara was an earthly reflection of the maturity and gravity of eternal Nature. Buddha left home. She stayed there. He found nirvana through renunciation. She did not renounce anything, nor did she strive for nirvana. Hers was the highest sadhana and tapasya that a woman can aspire to, for it represents eternal contentment. Man is, by nature, a discontented jumble of dissipated thoughts. The life of Buddha was no exception, whereas Yashodhara remained an enigma, a challenge for those who believe that renunciation and enjoyment are diametrically opposed, constantly struggling against each other. Otherwise she would have also remained entangled in the web of life and forgotten her true self amidst the pleasures and enjoyments of Kapilavastu. Could Buddha have done this?

In the final analysis one finds that Yashodhara found eternal Buddhahood within herself, whereas Siddhartha remained just Gautama, and could not tread the path of eternal sadhana. He kept on searching but could not find it.

Mahatma Buddha's birthday is being celebrated all over the world. Thousands of years have gone by, but the messages that such great souls brought for humanity survive. It is the duty of sadhus and sannyasins to repeat those messages time and again, that humanity may remember

those eternal truths and draw inspiration from the lives of such great saints.

You must know my innermost thoughts and sentiments quite well by now. I'll come to Rajnandgaon as soon as this program is over. Please don't fuss over my living arrangements and my programs. Keep them simple and modest. Hari Om.

Our hearts were overflowing with emotion and elation as we read the words of this great saint. My thoughts went back to those unforgettable days in April 1953 when we had gone to Rishikesh. We had brought back many books and periodicals from there. While perusing them my eyes had become riveted on an article Swami Satyam had written on 8th September 1950. I read and re-read that essay many times. It appeared as if the attractive sannyasin was smiling and saying, "Gurudev's inspiration is stirring within me. I'll consider myself free from his debt only when I've filled the hearts of millions with his teachings and, anointed with the most sacred dust of his lotus feet, I set forth and keep walking on the path to the final destination of absolute truth and unforgettable beauty . . ."

Satyavratji was an office superintendent at the Bengal Nagpur Cotton Mills of the Sawalis Company at Nandgram. The manager and nine main officers were British. Everyone liked and admired Satyavratji's nature, behaviour and style of work. The atmosphere in the mill area was quite congenial. Everyone lived in peace and harmony. During 1954-55, the company had to leave India and it began winding up its operations. B.N. Agrawal of Calcutta purchased the Rajnandgaon mill from the company. All the foreign officers left and new managers were brought in to run the mill. Satyavratji's responsibilities and workload increased a lot. His influence could be seen in all facets of the mill operations.

When plans were made in April 1956 to invite Swami Satyananda to Nandgram, everyone in the mill area cooperated with zeal and enthusiasm. A meeting was held, plans were

chalked out, preparations were started, a message was put out in the local newspaper, pamphlets were printed . . .

### **Arrival in Nandgram**

At the call of ‘Satya’ and ‘Dharma’, on 7th June Swami Satyananda Saraswati set foot in Nandgram with the first rays of the rising sun. Hundreds of people had gathered at the railway station to welcome him. They were greeted with the sight of a striking sannyasin in the mould of Lord Vamana, who was radiating immense strength and energy. Everyone prostrated at his feet in respect and adoration. When he finally arrived at Satyavratji’s place, it had begun to resemble a fairground.

Some people who fancied themselves to be great sadhakas and scholars, and who had been greatly impressed by Swami Satyananda’s writings, had imagined him to be a grave and great personality rather literally – grave in speech, great in weight! When they saw a simple-mannered sannyasin whose limbs and gait had a childlike delicacy and simplicity, whose face bore an expression of both mirth and gravity, whose overall boyish appearance was similar to Lord Vamana, they were sorely disappointed. But when Swami Satyananda started talking to them like an old acquaintance, asking about their health and spirits in a sweet voice, their doubts began to vanish.

In this desert of life, many are the beings running after the mirage of pleasure and happiness. Of such deluded, wandering souls is Swami Satyananda the guide. People are searching for a power, a force that not only aids them in the pursuit of happiness, but also alleviates their pain and suffering. Swami Satyam is equipped with such a powerful force. No wonder then that the people of Nandgram were greatly impressed and influenced by his speech, manners, satsangs and lectures.

There are many institutions in Nandgram where saints and sages come regularly and conduct programs. Satyavratji was associated with all of them, but he had a soft spot for the

children's club of Shankar Bhavan (the place where Swami Sivananda had been asked to send a sanniyasin to conduct satsangs during the Ganesha festivities in September). At the special request of the Shankar Bhavan people, it was decided that Swamiji's evening satsangs would be held there.

People poured into Satyavratji's house all day long. The day would begin at 5 am with an asana and pranayama class and from 6 am onwards, there would be a constant stream of children coming in. The schools were closed for the summer vacations, so the children had a free run of the place. From 2 to 4 pm a satsang would be conducted for the ladies, and at 6 pm everyone would proceed for Shankar Bhavan and return after the end of the satsang at around 9 pm. Swami Satyananda's satsangs soon began to be published in the local newspapers and periodicals.

At the insistent request of the townspeople, Swami Satyananda went to stay at Shankar Bhavan for a week. The B.N.C. mill was some way off from the town and a vehicle was necessary to get there, making it difficult for most townspeople to meet Swamiji. At Shankar Bhavan, the crowds started coming at 5 am and stayed till 10 pm at night! The children used to spend their entire day there. Swami Satyananda had become their messiah. For the first time in their life, the children had an opportunity to come into close contact with a saint and imbibe some pearls of wisdom. The children would innocently ask, "Swamiji, why don't you sit on a silver chair like the other swamis who come here? And why don't you eat badam halwa? Once another Swamiji came and he would finish off one kilo of badam halwa, not to mention great quantities of fruit and dried fruits in one sitting! And he wouldn't give us even a tiny morsel as prasad. Why don't you get some badam halwa made for yourself? You hardly eat anything, so all the halwa will come to us as prasad. What fun that will be!"

The children would exhibit various talents all day long. They would sing, dance, play games and enact skits. They learnt many bhajans from Swamiji as well. People would exclaim in surprise, "Who are these kids! The cowherd friends

of Sri Krishna or the monkey army of Sri Rama or the ghosts and goblins of Lord Shiva? And who are you? It is way beyond our understanding . . .” Swami Satyananda would laughingly reply, “I am a mere sannyasin and these children are the Ramas, Krishnas and Shivas of the future, the upcoming leaders of the nation . . .”

Whoever met Swami Satyananda or listened to his satsangs even once, could never forget him. Everyone wondered, “How could all these wonderful virtues and qualities have developed in one so young in years? Empathy, self-sacrifice, generosity, truth, unconditional love, affection, childlike innocence, humility, gravity and far-sightedness – all these qualities are thoroughly ingrained in him. His character is worthy of emulation indeed.”

At the invitation of Jagmohan Motiwala, Swamiji went to Burhanpur on 24th June. From there he proceeded to Indore. He returned on 30th June, stayed in Rajnandgaon for two to three days and then departed for Benares to attend a congregation of sadhus and saints. Before leaving he said that he would return on 26th July.

A meeting of local devotees and admirers of Swamiji was held wherein it was decided that everyone would go to the railway station on the 26th to welcome him and bring him to Shankar Bhavan. After bhajan, kirtan, pooja prasad, lunch and satsang, Satyavratji would bring him home.

The head clerk at the railway station was a disciple of Swami Sivananda. He was overjoyed at the arrival of Swami Satyananda in Nandgram. On 26th July everyone proceeded to the station at one o'clock in the afternoon. When the head clerk saw the big crowd of adults and children jostling for platform tickets, he said, “Children, no need for tickets, just shout ‘Swami Satyananda ki jaya’ and enter the station!”

Upon arriving, Swami Satyananda was brought to Shankar Bhavan. Bhajan and kirtan were going on in the main hall. Swamiji rested for a while, had a bath and then came to the hall. No sooner had Swamiji been seated than the children went wild. They performed Tandava nritya to the chant of



*Agad Bam*, put on a fancy dress show, and exhibited their best talents before their beloved Swamiji. Then the girls got together and acted out the part of a long railway train. Swamiji also joined in the little show, as if trying to say, “Keep your knowledge, your philosophy, your spirituality. Let my life flow splendidly as a child’s. Let me fly like the carefree birds. Let me remain innocent and unknowing. I don’t need your learning or erudition. Let me sing with these birds, please don’t stop me.”

*I am a bird of the endless sky,  
I am the ceaseless flow of nectar,  
I am tranquil eternal bliss,  
I am the luminous star of joys.*

Children, flowers and balloons were all over the hall, spreading laughter, joy and bliss. After dinner at 5 pm, Swamiji addressed everyone and thereafter everyone accompanied Swamiji to the mill.

Swamiji stayed at our home for three days. “I will keep on travelling,” he said, “and your home will be my head-office. My letters will come here. You must reply to those letters and arrange my programs as required. Wherever I go, I shall send you my contact address. If you need to ask something or inform me about upcoming programs, write to me at that address. You two are like the twin wheels of my chariot. Both of you are extremely capable, which is why I’m handing you this responsibility.” After explaining everything in detail, Swami Satyam left for Benares on 30th July to spend his *chaturmas*, the four months of the monsoon traditionally used for sadhana

We felt as if Swamiji was our very own kith and kin, who had been separated by fate and now the grace of God had brought us together again. Swamiji had stated that Satyavrat is the embodiment of his vrat; the two long-lost brothers have now become one in spirit indeed.

In April of 1953, during the first darshan in Rishikesh itself, I had seen Swami Satyam in the form of Adiguru

Shankaracharya and Sant Jnaneshwar. On 7th June 1956, when he came to Nandgram for the first time, at the station he had looked at me and said, “Mother, you . . .” and when he had alighted from the car at our door and I had offered flowers at his feet, he had laughed and said, “. . . so finally I have reached your home.” I was reminded of Shankaracharya’s words, “Mother! I had promised that I would come to your side during your final moments, and now I’ve kept my promise.” And I thought, “He is indeed my Shankaracharya!” I had been waiting for my Shankaracharya all these days; now placing Swami Satyananda on that pedestal I felt blessed indeed.

### **Planning the trip to Gangotri**

Swami Satyananda came to Nandgram again in November and stayed for three days. Programs had been arranged for him in Shakti, Amravati, Rewa and Bihar.

“In May next year, I shall go to Gangotri and Yamunotri,” he announced one day.

“We would love to accompany you,” said Satyavratji.

“Certainly,” replied Swamiji, “but if you want to go on such a trip in the Himalayan heights, you should start going on three or four mile walks daily. Only then can you contemplate embarking on such a trip. The total walking distance to Gangotri-Yamunotri is about three hundred miles. You will be walking ten to fifteen miles daily on steep, mountainous paths. Nonetheless everyone should strive to visit the Himalayas at least once in their lifetime. It is worthless visiting Kashmir if one hasn’t visited Badri-Kedar and Gangotri-Yamunotri. Sivanjali also wants to come. Write to her, fix the dates and take leave accordingly. When you reach Rishikesh, you must take diksha also from Gururji. Write to Sivananda Ashram and make the necessary arrangements. In case you have any doubts or questions, enquire from me. We shall meet again in Delhi in May next year.”

Swami Satyananda never let anyone touch his feet, and if anyone offered him anything, he wouldn’t accept it. If

someone insisted on leaving a monetary offering, he would buy something and distribute it amongst the children. He never received anything, never kept anything. “People give me food for my belly and railway tickets for my journey,” he would say. “What else do I need? When Satyavrat is my secretary and Basanti my treasurer, why should I even worry about such matters?”

In Shakti, Gajanan Sharma had organized a three-day program and in Amravati, Vishnu Bhagwan had arranged programs at many schools and colleges. At the invitation of Krishna Chandra Sendre he went to Jabalpur. There he travelled and visited many places, including some historic caves on the banks of the Narmada. From there he went on to Raipur and the rural areas nearby. We kept receiving letters and copies of his lectures from all these places. The letters carried advice on sadhana and other spiritual matters.

In March he went to Bhagalpur. There he stayed at Shiv Bhavan and conducted satsangs. From Bhagalpur he visited Ara and Chhapra. In May, he went to Munger. In Munger he liked Karna Chaura, an ancient hillock, the most. Daily he would go for a walk and spend some time there in contemplation and meditation.

Swamiji kept sending instructions and directions regarding the upcoming trip to Gangotri. “I will reach Delhi on 17th May,” one letter announced, “and meet you at the station on the 19th. From Delhi we will proceed to Rishikesh and reach there by the 21st. Write a letter to Sivananda Ashram informing them about our arrival on the 21st. Also let them know that you want to take diksha from Poojya Gurudev on the 23rd.”

Everything proceeded according to plan. Having made all the necessary arrangements for the journey, the two of us reached Delhi on 19th May. Swami Satyananda met us at the station and we stayed at Hanuman Prasad Mathur’s residence for the night. Sivanjali also arrived there and the next day we all went to her house where we met friends and acquaintances and finished all the preparations for our trip. On 21st morning

we left for Rishikesh by bus. Swamiji had a two-day program in Saharanpur, so he got off on the way, saying that he would reach Rishikesh by the afternoon of 23rd. Satyavrat, Basanti and Sivanjali reached Rishikesh in the evening. Since they had written in advance, board and lodging had been arranged for them in the ashram. After attending the evening satsang program, they rested for the night.

On the 22nd, we went to the local market and purchased malas, prasad and other necessary items for diksha. A lot of lady teachers from that region used to visit the ashram for a few weeks during the summer holidays. Sivanjali also visited the ashram every year. Through her I made friends with all of them. We also met the swamis of the ashram, had satsangs with them, walked around, did seva, chatted with different people and gained a lot of useful information about the trip to Gangotri.

Satyavrat and Basanti were active social and spiritual workers, not just in their immediate family and society, but in the entire town of Nandgram. Chanting of the *Gita*, *Ramayana* and *Bhagavata*, and other religious observances were a regular feature at their home. As far as discipleship of a living guru was concerned, they had a certain rebellious streak in them. But ever since their visit to Rishikesh in 1953, they had taken Swami Sivananda to be their guru. Swami Satyananda had told to them to take formal mantra initiation from Gurudev, and Satyavratji had sent a letter to Sivananda Ashram in this regard. On 22nd he bought all the necessary items from the bazaar, but seeing the quiet expression on Basanti's face he had only registered his name for diksha, although Swami Satyam had advised that it would be better if both took mantra diksha together.

On the morning of Thursday, the 23rd of May, everyone was seated in Gurudev's cottage. Basanti was sitting next to Satyavratji right in front of Gurudev. Sivanjali was also keen that both should take mantra diksha from Gurudev. She couldn't hold herself back and finally blurted out, "Swamiji, please initiate Basanti as well."

Gurudev looked at Basanti. At the same time Basanti raised her head and looked at Gurudev . . . Instead of Swami Sivananda, she saw Swami Satyananda sitting there! She kept staring. Swamiji also kept looking at her. Then he started laughing and said, “Ohji, she will also get a guru, but at the right time. Her guru will come right to her doorstep to initiate her, and she will do a lot of work for his mission.”

When I looked again, I saw that it was Swami Sivananda again who was seated in front of me. I couldn’t think clearly at all. I could only manage to prostrate at his feet. Satyavratji, however, was quite annoyed with me for not having taken diksha from Gurudev.

After lunch, Satyavratji went to the bus stand to receive Swami Satyam who was coming from Saharanpur. At the ashram Swami Satyam met all his guru bhais with great joy and affection. The press workers were overjoyed to see him. And when he went to Guruji and bowed at his feet, it seemed as if Guruji would engulf him completely with the wave of affection welling up in his heart. The meeting of guru and disciple was a sight to behold! It seemed as if the guru’s very own shadow had taken solid shape and form and, like the reflection of the full moon on the waves of the Ganga, was spreading its silvery radiance all around.

In the evening satsang, Swami Satyam delivered a speech at the behest of Gurudev. After his speech, he bowed before Gurudev. Gurudev laughed and, patting Swami Satyam’s pocket, remarked, “It looks like Satyam’s pockets are full to bursting point.”

“This sannyasin’s pockets are empty, Swamiji,” replied Swami Satyam and then added, laughing, “Satyam will proceed on his journey only after you have filled his pockets to the brim.”

Gurudev joined in the laughter and then said to one of the swamis, “Ohji, sing a kirtan in honour of Satyananda Maharaj’s trip to Gangotri.” After the kirtan he left saying, “Jaya ho, Jaya ho, glory to Swami Satyananda and his fellow travellers, glory to Ma Gangotri.” Everyone watched the scene

transfixed. Not only his pockets, but Swami Satyam's entire baggage had been filled with precious gems!

We were to leave at 4 am on 24th May. Dr Chatterji from Ara and Mata Krishnananda and Triveni Poddar from Bombay had also arrived. That made a total of seven travellers. Everyone was busy making final preparations, but Sivanjali and Basanti were busy talking. They woke up at 2 am in the night and went to sit by the Ganga. Sivanjali always came to the ashram during vacations and did translation work. The two 'sisters' kept chatting about their experiences at the ashram.

Swami Satyam met all the ashram inmates and bade them farewell. After the satsang, there had been a discussion regarding the next day's journey. Swami Satyam had said to Basanti, "You should have also taken mantra diksha from Swamiji. He alone is the guru." So saying he had walked away. He had to bid farewell to many more before departing in the morning. He went to each and every corner of the ashram, through paths oft-travelled, meeting each and every shrub and tree on the way. He walked through jungles and across hills and finally towards Ma Ganga and his favourite spot, where the flow reverses to create a treacherous whirlpool. That is where he would go swimming at midnight during his ashram days. He saw the big rock on the banks of the river where he would sit for meditation well past midnight and Guruji had to come searching for him. Walking along the shore near Swamiji's kutir, he came to the spot where the two sisters were busy conversing. He also joined in the conversation. The three became so immersed in satsang that they lost all track of time . . .

Presently Satyavratji came and announced, "Swamiji, it's 4 o'clock. The tonga wallahs have arrived." Swami Satyam replied, "You should all take the blessings of Ma Ganga first," and proceeded towards Swami Sivananda's kutir. Just then a loud Om was heard and a few minutes later Gurudev came out of his kutir. This was the time of his daily bath in the Ganga. Swami Satyam bowed to him. We also came near and paid our respects.

“May God bless you all. Glory to Ma Ganga, glory to the Gangotri pilgrims, glory to Swami Satyananda Maharaj, Jaya ho, Om Namo Narayanaya . . .” So saying, Swamiji gave us his auspicious blessings.

### **Journey to Gangotri**

Our journey started on this auspicious note. Sivananda Ashram is situated in Muni ki Reti, which is two miles away from town. Leaving the ashram at 4.30 am, we reached Rishikesh from where we caught a bus. The bus left Rishikesh at 7 am and, covering a distance of seventy-eight miles on mountainous roads and stopping at many places along the way, it finally dropped us at Dharasu in the evening. The journey on foot begins from here. Eighty miles to Gangotri and eighty miles back. The journey to Yamunotri also starts from here which is one hundred and forty miles both ways. The two trips amount to three hundred miles of trekking on difficult terrain. God will surely give us the strength and our guide shall unfailingly lead us along.

Our journey started at 3.30 am on 25th May. We had two coolies with us, who were carrying our luggage and bedding. There was another coolie carrying a chair on his back. It was for Mata Krishnananda. She could not walk much. The remaining six of us started our march on foot. I was carrying only a camera, medicines, needle and thread, vermillion, cloves and cardamoms in a small bag. We would stop every now and then, have tea and meals, take some rest and then continue on our way. Somehow we managed to reach Uttarkashi by 6 o'clock in the evening. After having walked eighteen miles, our feet were aching. But a certain thrill was coursing through our hearts. We had covered eighteen miles on our very first day and we were proud of our achievement.

Swami Satyam had reached Uttarkashi by 4 pm with the coolies. He rented a room, had it cleaned and got our bedding laid out. Everything was ready and waiting for us when we got there. Swami Satyam's guru bhais – Swami Shardananda, Swami Ramprem and Swami Abhedananda – had come to

Uttarkashi many years ago for sadhana and they were living in little huts. On hearing about Swami Satyam's arrival, they came to visit him. When we reached Uttarkashi, their satsang was going on.

Once in Uttarkashi, we rested for a while as per Swami Satyam's directions. Then we had some tea, massaged our legs and went for a dip in Varuni Ganga. After taking our bath we went for dinner. Swami Satyam's guru bhais accompanied us at our request. After dinner, we returned to our room where the satsang continued. All the residents of the dharmashala gathered in our room to listen to the satsang. The satsang went on till 9 pm and then we walked some distance to see off the swamis. We were going to stay in Uttarkashi for two days to rest and see the different places of interest.

After a morning bath in the Ganga, our satsang session continued from where it had left off the previous night. It started as soon as Swami Satyam's guru bhais arrived. Everyone sang bhajans and kirtans with joy and gusto. Swami Ramprem was a poet as well. His bhajan *Ganga kinare mera dera* was very popular. He recited and sang many of his poems and songs. Swami Shardananda used to work in the ashram studio. All the guru bhais talked about their days in the ashram. After lunch we went to their little ashram, saw the sights, visited historic temples, and strolled on the banks of the Ganga. On the third day, we walked up the surrounding hills, went to temples and finally visited the bazaar to buy a vessel to carry the Gangotri water. We also bought a separate pot to keep water in for Rameshwaram. If and when we go to Rameshwaram, we will take that water.

"Buy another small copper pot," said Swami Satyam. "We'll take some Gangotri water for Swami Sivananda in it." What sentiments and feelings towards the guru! Only the fortunate get to see such gurus and disciples these days.

The next day we recommenced our journey. We would leave at 3 am in the morning. Swami Satyam and the coolies would reach our next halt by 10 or 11 am. He would hire a room in a dharmashala, get it cleaned and ready, and then rest a little.



Soon we would also arrive there. After resting a while we would purchase food items from a nearby shop. The shop owner would give us cooking utensils too, and if we asked, he would have his servant cook food for us as well. We would take a bath in the Ganga and then bring the food to our room. If the place had a hotel, we would eat there itself.

The first day Basanti had said, “We will cook the food ourselves,” to which Swami Satyam replied, “In that case you should have stayed at home. Now that you have come all the way here, you should enjoy each and every aspect of the journey. Look at the things around, listen to the different sounds, stroll around, meet and talk with the other travellers, give someone medicines if needed, teach someone something you know, help someone in need, and then see how much happiness and joy you derive from the journey. You will learn so many new things.”

After that I never raised the issue of cooking food myself. There were seven of us pilgrims and three coolies. After we had finished our meals, they would clean the plates and pans and I would return them to the shop owner.

Before starting the day’s journey, Swami Satyam would explain everything in advance – where to stop for tea, where the road bifurcates, which path to take, where to watch out for landslides, etc. Explaining everything he would quickly set off so that he could reach the next destination early and get rooms for us. The coolies also walked swiftly and arrived early. We would arrive by evening and the same routine followed – rest, bath in the Ganga, dinner, satsang, sleep . . .

We would walk twelve to fifteen miles every alternate day, then rest our feet the next day. We would just stroll around on the banks of the Ganga or in the nearby hills, and see the beautiful caves and waterfalls. Then at 3 am on the following day, the journey would start again. On the way, we would distribute medicines to other pilgrims and when the local women met us and said in sweet sing-song voices, “O mother, give us some vermilion, give us some needles and thread,” we would happily give these things to them.

Walking, talking, playing, laughing and popping childlike questions in the company of a great saint, we made our way across hills, streams, hot water springs, waterfalls and glaciers. On the way we saw some Japanese pagodas. Swami Satyam took us inside. The statues are the same as Indian temples, but the style of sitting and worshipping is Japanese. Swami Satyam told us about their style of meditation and how they have unshakeable faith in God and mantra.

It was growing dark. I attempted to light a candle. “Why don’t you light the lamp of your soul,” interjected Swami Satyam, “which will stay alight forever? This life is transient like the candle, extinguished by the slightest of draughts. And then the darkness will become even more fearsome. But no one can extinguish the light of the soul. The soul and its resplendent radiance are eternal and everlasting.”

Swami Satyam then took us to the Tibetan camp. He spoke to them in their own tongue, which impressed them very much. They served us tea which smelt and tasted a bit strange, but within five minutes we felt greatly refreshed and energized.

## **Gangotri**

In this manner, enjoying our journey to the utmost, we covered the entire stretch of eighty miles, and at 10 o’clock one fine morning, we reached Gangotri. Just as a little child walks along with his mother, holding her finger in his chubby hand, asking her, “What is this?” and “What is that?” so had we come all the way to Gangotri in Swami Satyam’s motherly company. Reaching that sacred place, all of us felt a wave of spiritual bliss and delight course through our bodies.

It was very cold. Water kept in a glass outside would have frozen from the cold. We put our luggage in a dharmashala and went for Mother Ganga’s darshan. When we dipped our hands in the water, it felt as if they had touched a block of ice. We could barely sprinkle the holy water on our hands, feet and face. Only Swami Satyam was brave enough to take a bath . . .

We had lunch at a hotel after which we rested. At 3 pm we came out and went for a long walk by the Ganga. We sat in meditation for some time and then returned for dinner. After dinner we went to the temple dedicated to Ma Ganga. Amidst bhajans and kirtans, Swami Satyam told us about the glory of Ganga. The satsang continued late into the night and all the pilgrims stayed on to listen to Swami Satyam's words. When the satsang finally ended and everyone came out, Basanti's shoes were missing! Greatly agitated by the loss, she kept saying, "I had left them right here, who could have taken them . . ."

"Calm down," said Swami Satyam quietly, "the loss of shoes is a good sign. Just think, if someone took your shoes from Ma Ganga's doorstep, it must be someone greatly in need of them. If some religious-minded pilgrim walked eighty miles in this difficult mountainous terrain to reach the temple of Ma Ganga and then stole a pair of shoes, rest assured that he must have been in great distress. Feel happy that your shoes have given him much needed comfort and relief. You have a spare pair of shoes anyway. Just walk till the dharmashala barefoot and experience how it feels to be shoeless. And come again to this temple tomorrow and pray to the Mother that your shoes are stolen three to four times every year, that you may earn merit unwittingly."

I thought I was hearing a voice from the heavens. We returned to our room in the dharmashala and began singing bhajans and kirtans, but I remained lost in thought. What incredible power Swami Satyam's words carried, for after this incident at least three or four times every year I or Satyavratji lost our shoes or slippers at a satsang or convention. Since then I've made it a habit to take shoes and sandals for the swamis and other ashram residents.

Our fellow pilgrims, exhausted from the rigours of the journey, took a bath the next day, completed the worship and other rituals at the temple, filled their water containers with Gangotri water and, singing the glories of Ma Ganga, began their return journey the same day. But we had planned to stay

here for four days. With great difficulty we have managed to come to the lap of Mother Ganga, that too in the company of someone of the calibre of Swami Satyam. Now we will roam in the mountains and jungles of this area for the next few days and make the most of our stay.

Swami Swananda is a guru bhai of Swami Satyam. He lives in a little ashram in Gangotri itself. Every day we had satsang with him. We would stroll on the banks of the Ganga and venture far out, looking at trees, hilltops, rocks and caves. There were hardly any fruits or flowers in that region, only big, thick-barked trees. When we got tired of walking, we would return straight to the hotel. Two avadhootas always live there, one is Swami Ramananda and the other is Swami Krishnashram, who has a lady disciple by the name of Bhagavati. We had many satsangs with these two avadhootas. Swami Krishnashram always maintained *mouna*, perpetual silence. He would communicate via gestures which were interpreted for us by Bhagavati. During winter, everyone comes down from Gangotri. The temple priests bring the temple idol with them and the shop and hotel owners also come down, shutting down their establishments. Only the two avadhootas and Bhagavati stay on. At that time, there is snow and ice all around and these people are unable to come out. They remain absorbed in dhyana and samadhi.

Leaving us in Gangotri, Swami Satyam began proceeding towards Gomukh. He told us that the route to Gomukh was quite dangerous and so we should stay in Gangotri. But we all decided to go with him no matter what, and we kept following him until he was forced to change his mind about going to Gomukh. That evening we walked a long way along the Ganga. Instructing us to sit some distance apart from each other and practise japa and meditation, he kept on walking. I was tempted to follow him but he strictly forbade me and went on ahead. It was getting dark; after a while we all made our way back to the dharmashala. Giving the ingredients for making khichari to the servant, I decided to go in search of Swamiji with Satyavratji, who had a torch at hand. We had hardly gone

any distance when we saw a light coming in our direction from far away. Satyavratji said in a voice filled with awe and wonder, “That is Swamiji coming towards us. The divine energy of this sacred place is accompanying him. We should quietly turn back.” And we returned to the dharmashala.

When Swamiji returned, he had a special glow on his face. His eyes were red and if we asked anything, instead of replying, he would just laugh and the dazzling radiance on his face would scatter all around. I asked him to eat something for dinner, but after having three or four mouthfuls, he quietly went to bed. We sat around him for a long time. As we were paying our respects to him before going to bed ourselves, we had a strange experience. We had covered him with six or seven blankets, yet his feet felt ice-cold and when we touched them, a tingling current shot through our bodies.

Everyone dozed off but I was unable to sleep. The biting cold made sitting in meditation impossible. I lay down and practised yoga nidra. During yoga nidra it appeared as if Swami Satyam had made all of us sit separately by the side of the Ganga and was himself walking on and on. There was snow all around and Swami Satyam was walking along the banks of the Ganga. Then he stopped; it looked like he was saying something or praying to someone. A dazzling light emerged from the Ganga and Swami Satyam bowed in respect. The light spread out over a nearby ice-covered rock. Swami Satyam sat down in meditation on that very spot, and the light spread all over him. Gradually the light faded, it began to snow and Swami Satyam fell asleep on that rock. Snowflakes kept falling on him and soon he was totally covered by them. We were trying to rouse him, but he kept saying, “Wake me up only if you will help and support me, if you will listen to me and do as I say . . .” And then the dream was over.

There is a sense of joy and bliss immanent everywhere in Gangotri. The divine energy of that place manifested before Swami Satyam and gave him a special mandate to fulfil. Ma Ganga also blessed him with her darshan and went on to stay in his body for a day. Everyone witnessed this extraordinary event.

As we were about to take a bath in the Ganga one morning, Satyavratji said to Swami Satyam, “Swamiji, please give Basanti something.”

“That something is not in her fate,” Swamiji replied, “but it is definitely part of my destiny. I’ll give you something, but then you’ll have to return it. Promise me that you won’t keep it, but will return it to me.”

“Yes, we’ll return it,” said both of us and we made a solemn resolve on the spot. Swamiji took some water from the Ganga in his palms, made a sankalpa, and then sprinkling that water on us, said, “I am giving it to you, and you will return it.”

“As you wish,” we replied . . .

In the mornings, wrapped in shawls, sweaters and blankets, sitting by a fire, we would have satsang with Swami Satyam. When the sun became brighter and warmer, we would venture outside.

One morning Swami Satyam said:

I have loved this world and its inhabitants since time immemorial, for it is in and through this world that I’ve beheld the many lilas that the Almighty enacts. The sorrows of the world have been my tears and its joys my laughter. I’ve never identified myself with the transcendental and unmanifest Absolute. And I never will. But this trip to Gangotri has shattered some of these dreams of everlasting love for the manifest world. Within the lila body of the Lord, I can hear notes of discord. Now only my physical body is here, I am somewhere else. I feel as if I am walking all alone amongst mountains, forests, rivers and terraced fields. There is none but me, walking staff in hand. I am beginning to like the quiet solitude. There are countless paths in the snow-covered eternal Himalayas that I can follow.

The roar of the Ganga hurtling down the Himalayas is drowning out all the other shrill and discordant noises of the world. The sheer vastness of the towering peaks

is making petty human egos dance at its feet. Is this the message I am supposed to receive from the Ganga and the Himalayas?

*Aami yantra, tumi yantri* – ‘I am but a vehicle, and O Mother, you are its driver’. Whichever way you drive, that way shall I proceed. This is the feeling uppermost in my mind.

In the afternoons, when the sunshine was warmest, we would stroll to the banks of the Ganga. We dared not venture into the freezing water; rather we would just pour two or three pots of water upon ourselves. After standing in the sunshine for a little while, we would change our clothes, wring out our wet clothes, bring them to the dharmashala for drying and sit in front of the stove ourselves. But Swami Satyam would take a dip in the river every day.

On the third day, it suddenly became overcast during the afternoon and it started to rain. Soon the rain turned into snow. It appeared as if balls of white cotton were billowing all around. Treetops, hilltops, rocks, everything was covered in snow. The locals said, “Mother Nature is putting on a show for Swamiji. It hasn’t snowed like this in the month of June for the last fifteen years. If it continues to snow for the next four hours, not only will there be snow everywhere, even the water of the Ganga will freeze. Then we will have to break the ice with hammer and chisel, thaw it on a stove and only then will we be able to drink it! God’s lilas are awe-inspiring indeed . . .”

By evening it had stopped snowing, but it had become terribly cold. Wrapped in three or four blankets each, we were sitting at the fireplace, keeping ourselves warm with the tonic of Swami Satyam’s words. If he ever paused, we would begin shivering again.

Swami Satyam was saying:

Every year thousands of pilgrims come to this sacred place. When they set out from their homes, they are saturated with feelings of bhakti and devotion, but reaching the

doorstep of Ma Ganga after a gruelling journey, they treat divinity and devotee as two opposite poles far apart from each other, and consider the offering of a trivial gift to God as the final culmination of their pilgrimage. That defeats the very purpose of the Herculean efforts saints and sages have been making for ages. The austerity involved in doing the pilgrimage, which was supposed to bridge the gap between God and His devotee, goes to waste. These days it has become easy to reach Badri-Kedar. Yes, there is still some difficulty in getting to Gangotri-Yamunotri, which is what makes this pilgrimage worthwhile. But in twenty or twenty-five years this route will also become easy and the real joy and worth of pilgrimage will vanish. Man will reach the moon, but he will slip further and further away from his own true nature.

This divine river Alaknanda is the essence of all the rivers in the world. Its divine splendour is reflected in Kaaba and Kashi, in every church and mosque. Whether it is the Bible or the Koran, the Avesta or the Puranas, they all contain the songs of the Himalayas. Whether it is a sadhu or a maulvi, a father or a fakir, their inner spirit is but a reflection of the sacred Badrikashram. Its eternal message is what Prophet Mohammed and Jesus Christ came to deliver; its divine grandeur is what Kabir, Nanak, Namdev and others came to glorify.

Man's blood is not made up of white and red cells alone, rather it is derived from the pristine whiteness of the Himalayan snows, the verdant greenery of the Himalayan forests, the azure expanse of the Himalayan skies and the cascading motion of the swiftly descending Alaknanda.

After having our meals in Bhaironghati that evening, Swami Satyam instructed us to rest, but we collected some firewood and lighting a small campfire, we began singing bhajans beside it. Swami Satyam laughed and said, "I know why you are doing so much seva. It seems like you want to go to Kedarnath as well."



“Swamiji, we may not be going to Badri-Kedar this time,” we exclaimed, “but at least you can give us a glimpse of those glorious places here and now.” Swami Satyam smiled and then he began sharing his experiences of Badri-Kedar.

### **Description of Badrinath and Kedarnath**

I’ve been to Badrinath and Kedarnath twice. Great rishis, including Parashara, Vyasa and Jaimini, lived on the banks of the Saraswati near Mana, which is three miles north of Badrinath. Vedavyasa had compiled the four Vedas there. The *Brahma Sutras* were also written here. Panini composed his Sanskrit grammar here and Sage Kashyap started his muni tradition here. In later ages, both Ramanjacharya and Madhavacharya lived here and wrote their treatises on Vedanta. Whereas the eternal Himalayan ranges behind Kedar have remained insurmountable over the ages, the accessibility of Badrikashram made it the conduit for many foreign invasions, military as well as cultural.

This Badrikashram is verily a monument to the triumphant saga of Badarayan, the great visionary and the composer of most of our original Sanskrit scriptures. He is the first historic personality of this place. The innermost sentiments of the Himalayan civilization were first expressed as poems, stories and the Vedas on the banks of this very Alaknanda. The sacred sounds of this celestial river were the inspiration behind the serene yet potent mantras of the *Sama Veda*.

This holy land imbued piety and purity in the minds of the great souls who lived here. There were no nightclubs or dancing damsels, neither cigarettes nor liquor, nor any other sensual pleasures in this sacred land. That is why it has been able to initiate countless souls into the mantra of purity and holiness despite numerous invasions and historic upheavals. Herein lie scattered the remnants of our civilization from the era of the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, Puranas and even older ages of the hoary

past. Witness to the pitiable plight of Bharatvarsha, the famed peaks of Nara and Narayana have been standing and waiting for ages for a suitable hero who will lift this nation from the quagmire it has sunk into.

Badrikashram is at a height of 10,480 feet. Its creation in the later period of the volcanic era is the reason why its inner heat hasn't cooled down, unlike other Himalayan mountains. Its peaks are never snow-covered. Like the heart of a saint, only thorn-free trees abound here, giving the impression that this temple town has also taken sannyasa. Jyotirmath, despite its fame, is devoid of natural spiritual wealth. Here one won't find either the Alaknanda or the serene Himalayan civilization. In the winters, this is where Badrinarayan is worshipped. A path branches off on the right towards Bhavishya Badri. The temple there is from the post-Ashoka period, built sometime in the seventh century AD. Would the surrounding valleys have heard the chants of the Trisharana and Panchasheela mantras in this temple in some bygone era? The well-travelled paths of the Aryans on the banks of this Alaknanda must have heard the chants of the Tripitak from wandering Buddhist bhikshus walking these paths in the distant past. This is the birthplace of the all-conquering Aryans.

Millions of Indians have been coming to this physical god for centuries for the removal of their ignorance, the narrowness of their minds, the varied problems of life. This ever-beautiful celestial city has been inviting us to take a refreshing dip in the Alaknanda of pure love between God and devotee. But has anyone ever accepted that invitation and transformed himself into a temple of the divine?

It is difficult to estimate the size of the crowds that come here to visit the temple of this physical Narayana. The outer temple is always crowded, but the inner sanctum sanctorum is empty. Who will go there to receive the love, grace and blessings of Narayana? And who will tell us the way to that transcendental Narayana? Inestimable offerings and donations are poured into the temple; but O miserly man!

Though you may boast of your love for the Almighty, what you offer Him are only petty, perishable presents, whereas to the world you have offered your priceless possession, your very own soul! What a great irony! Narayana gave you this rare human birth and you are such an idiot that instead of offering your soul unto him, you give him paltry offerings picked up from the street! And yet you fancy yourself to be a great bhakta . . .

Swami Satyam had become quite emotional. Then, regaining his composure, he continued:

Now hear about the other places. The river Mandakini keeps on flowing, like the fluid current of consciousness beneath all mutable names and forms. It is verily a river of nectar. Its mere sight gives rest and relaxation to the eyes, music to the ears, coolness to the body, happiness to the heart and purity and bliss to the soul. This boisterous river, in the exuberance of its youth, has been cutting its way through these proud mountains, just as the Mandakini of the mind pierces through the self-righteous pride of sadhus!

I love the forests, the mountains, the rivers and the moon. I enjoy walking in their presence. To me, they are the real constituents of life. If one hasn't fully enjoyed the joy and beauty of life, one is indeed a blot on this earth. How can one enjoy Kashmir if one hasn't been to Kedar? Upon this very route did the five Pandavas, their wife, Draupadi and a lone dog walk many millennia ago . . .

This path is timeless and eternal. Everyone will have to walk on it sooner or later. Life is like a night spent at a wayside inn. After spending the night there, we'll look for another inn and eat, drink and rest there. And soon it will be time to leave that one as well. The traveller who is anxious about this coming and going will want to stay on in the same inn. But once his time is up, he will be booted out.

Therefore, O traveller! Go on walking despite the sweat, the fatigue, the hot sun, the cold wind, the gnawing hunger and the agonizing thirst. Keep on walking, for Kedar, your grand destination, is near. The path leading up to Kedar appears like a damsel rushing headlong to meet her beloved. I also felt like I was going to meet someone special.

Gaurikund, at a height of six thousand feet, has a hot water spring nearby. This is followed by a steep seven-mile climb. The serene moonlight, the silent snow-covered peaks, the gurgling sounds of the choppy waves of the Mandakini and the shifting shadows of the gently swaying trees on our path kept attracting my attention, but the real centre of attraction was 'someone' inhabiting a place 12,750 feet above sea level, whose beauty and charm made everything pale in comparison. It was a very steep climb. Everyone kept on walking, asking the milestones on the way about the whereabouts of that 'someone'. A hint of an answer came, we moved on. A biting cold wind began to blow, and our hearts began to feel the strain of the climb. The trees began to laugh with the wind. Was the snow-covered expanse of Kedar coming to meet us? Loaded with blankets upon blankets like mountain mules, leaning on sticks like blind men, and hobbling along like lame men, everyone was somehow dragging himself forward, shouting 'Jaya Kedarnath' now and then. We reached a height of 10,500 feet, the same as that of Gangotri. The mountain peaks encircling the path on three sides are sloping, not vertical as in Gangotri. That is why these slopes are amply covered with snow and it is much colder than in Gangotri.

Kedarnath is right ahead, 12,750 feet high. Sloping snow-covered mountains cover three of its sides. Not a single tree or shrub is to be seen. Completely bald like the head of a sannyasin! Kedar is a symbol of courage and valour; a challenge to the long-cultivated laziness of mankind. Millions of brutish egos have been sacrificed in its courtyard. But who has really seen His true form? Who

knows His whereabouts? Is He really here? Who is the God hidden in this stone temple? Who will break the stones of brutish cruelty and enter the temple? He who does so shall see Him.

The lingam in Kedarnath is rough and jagged. A critical archaeological evaluation suggests that it must have been an idol at some point in time, which for some reason was chiselled into its present shape of a shivalingam. The temple seems to be from the post-Ashoka period. Two heads are carved on the right wall of the temple. The heads have large ears, and their chests have been chiselled out.

In the afternoon it began raining. Soon the rain turned to snow, and a freezing wind began to blow. The priest gave us additional quilts and blankets, even a thick carpet and a rug, yet the cold was unbearable. I finally came out at five o'clock in the evening and began climbing further. The swami who had come with me couldn't go on, he was having difficulty breathing. I must have gone about five hundred feet. The mountain slope was quite steep and good footholds were hard to find. It was so cold one couldn't even spit. My shoes began to freeze, my heart began to tire out, the oxygen level kept on dropping. From there itself I had a glimpse of the hidden source of the Mandakini, and the fabled path which the Pandavas took to ascend to heaven. These sights sent a thrill of joy though my entire being, and I felt like jumping up to touch the sky.

The towering Himalayan peaks all around have been the silent witnesses of antiquity. All these wondrous sights are nectar for the eyes. A hoary memory from some unknown past suddenly surfaced in the inner lake of my mind. For the first time in life, I cried for no apparent reason. The tears kept on flowing, interrupted only by occasional hiccups. An overwhelming emotion arose in my heart – O nation of such immense beauty, vitality and virtue! What have you become today? To what depths have you fallen! Drinking the life-giving nectar of the Mandakini, you have

regurgitated poison into the society. You have mistaken the rousing sound of conches for the plaintive squeaks of a toy horn . . .

The Bhagavata civilization originated in the Himalayas and after descending with the currents of the Mandakini, down the slopes of tall mountains, through zigzagging valleys, it made its way to the rest of India, Arabia, Greece and the entire world. This is the civilization that awakened Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed and Mahavir, but today it has become a mere pretence to take undue advantage of the feelings and sentiments of timid householders. O Kedar! Aren't you the one who uttered the Vedas in the form of Hiranyagarbha? And look, the ones who call themselves your descendants can today be seen muttering, "Twelve annas, ten annas, five annas, whatever you want to give, but please give something in the name of God . . ."

So saying, Swami Satyam was overcome with emotion and he couldn't go on anymore . . .

### **Our return journey**

On our fourth day in Gangotri, we worshipped and prayed to Mother Ganga, filled our vessels with water from the river and with a heavy heart took our leave from Gangotri. Our return journey was similar to the way we had come up, stopping every now and then, resting, laughing, talking, listening to satsangs and bathing in the many rivers and waterfalls on the way. We crossed the glacier, which had reduced in size since we last saw it. At many places the ice had melted and water was flowing through. Under such conditions, crossing the glacier is particularly dangerous. Nonetheless we made our way across safely and on the auspicious day of Ganga Dussehra we reached Uttarkashi. The Garhwalis celebrate this as the day when Ganga descended onto the earth. They pray to Ma Ganga and carry her water to their homes. We enjoyed watching the smiling and laughing Garhwali women clad in new clothes and jewellery. Their requests for vermillion and

needle and thread sounded very pleasing to the ears. These women had come to Uttarkashi from far-off places to worship Ma Ganga.

Our upward-bound journey had become enjoyable only after Bhatwadi. On our return journey we stayed there for two days. The scenic beauty of that place was surreal and enchanting. In the evenings we would sit by the waterfall and enjoy the natural scenery around us. “Swamiji,” I ventured to break the silence, “this chapter of our life will end soon, and we will once again become entangled in the ups and downs, the delights and dejections of the world. How nice it would be to go on travelling like this for ever and ever!”

Swamiji replied:

Tear off the old pages of your life’s book, the spiritual chapter of your life has now begun. You have been reborn in Gangotri. This is yogic life. I have received a compelling command from Ma Ganga, a definite mandate from the divine forces. And to fulfil that, I will give you ‘something’. This can happen even now, but you have to undergo some preliminary training on the spiritual path first. Remove disharmony and discontent, jealousy and lethargy, and all the limiting thoughts of past and future from your mental plane. On the physical plane, go on with your household duties. On the intellectual plane, contemplate the karmas of your life, but beyond that do not allow worldly thoughts and samskaras to enter. Once the flute has reached Kanhaiya’s hands, only sweet notes can come out of it. In the same way, a life devoted to the service of one’s ishta becomes a storehouse of light, power and wisdom. You are a sincere aspirant, the power is within you. The burdens of pain, suffering and frustration are a thing of the past. The new chapter of your life contains bliss, joy, happiness, contemplation on your ishta and realization of the self . . .

Whatever you wish shall come to pass. Therefore, never, even by mistake, think inauspicious thoughts. Never think

ill of others or yourself. “My lord can do everything. He will always do what is good and beneficial for me” – once you develop such an attitude, all the sufferings of life will vanish. Do not let failures frighten you. Learn to become strong and resolute. Throw the pages of past failures into the dark ditch of ignorance. Worldly life is a tiny, cramped cage of hopes and sorrows, success and failure, whereas spiritual life is a wide, open field of joyful mirth and merrymaking. Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose, and sometimes we get hurt, yet we keep laughing. The pain, anger, infatuation and lust must vanish from life soon. You have to understand this yourself. Let the leaves of old habits and desires fall off quickly, so that new leaves and new flowers may sprout and a new spring may dawn.

In Uttarkashi we stayed at the Birla dharmashala. Swami Satyam’s guru bhais – Swamis Shardananda, Abhedananda and Rampremananda – came to meet us and we had long hours of satsang together. The guru bhais talked about their days in the Sivananda Ashram. The next day they took us on a tour and showed us many old caves and temples. We remained in their uplifting company for two whole days. Daily Swami Ramprem would sing the bhajan *Ganga kinare mera dera*. Swami Satyam sang the bhajan *Dulhan jaki radha rani, dulhau nand kumar*. This is where he started singing this bhajan, which he would sing daily.

As nightfall approached I attempted to light a candle. “There is no need to light a candle,” said Swami Satyam, “light the lamp of your mind. The mind is covered by a veil of ignorance and infatuation. Once you remove this veil, the light of this dazzling lamp will shine through.” I kept listening to his words of wisdom. I felt as if countless rays of radiant light were spreading all around me.

Swami Satyam was saying:

Light and darkness are the threshold of this world. Once you enter inside, your vision becomes obstructed by walls



covering you from three and a half sides. After a few days, you begin to feel suffocated. You wish to escape into the wide-open Elysian fields, and for that you feel the need for a saint who can be your guide and companion.

Learn to focus the scattered rays of your mind and experience the joy of meditating with a still mind. You have now crossed the stage of outer worship and ritual. You have graduated to the next class, the stage of *para bhakti*, supreme devotion. Now the mind has to be merged in subtler elements of name and form. Merge the name in the form and internalize that form. When the form internalizes within, knowledge dawns. In other words, immerse the mind in japa and dharana, let the japa merge in the dharana on the ishta. Materialize the ishta within. After this stage, one's own efforts are over. The difference between darkness and light disappears. From here on, the car moves by itself . . .

Swami Satyam was lost in meditation by now. Listening to his words, we had also entered into a state of meditation . . .

### **Return to Rishikesh**

At 3 am in the morning, the last leg of our downward trek started. Swami Satyam had raced ahead, but we faced a lot of problems coming down from Uttarkashi to Dharasu. By noontime it had started to rain and soon the rain turned into hail. It was difficult to walk in our wet clothes. We were dead tired. Nonetheless we kept on walking. Swami Satyam had reached Dharasu much earlier. As the day turned to dusk, he came searching for us. We were somehow dragging our feet on the road. As soon as we saw him, we were filled with an indescribable sense of joy and we came running up to him. We bowed to him and exulted, "We have made it through rain and storm, we've finally completed our pilgrimage."

"You are returning from the darshan of Ma Gangotri after having walked one hundred and sixty miles on tortuous, treacherous routes, and undergoing many hardships on

the way,” said Swami Satyam with a smile. “That is why the clouds have sprinkled water and performed your abhisheka. In Satya and Treta yugas, the celestials used to shower flowers, but now in this age of Kali yuga they have showered hailstones to celebrate the successful culmination of your journey!”

“But in a sense this is only the beginning of your real journey. On the vast, wide stage of the world, you have to accomplish many more expeditions. Come, take a bath, have dinner, sit for satsang and then rest. Tomorrow we will travel seventy-five miles by bus and reach Rishikesh.”

“Now that we have set out on this journey with you,” Satyavratji said, “we are like the blind man walking without his staff. We are at your mercy now, Swamiji; whether you save us or snub us, it is up to you. But we will not leave you.”

“We are co-travellers on this path,” replied Swami Satyam. “I will support and guide you on this path, but you have to do the walking.”

“We have been so brave and courageous to have accomplished this journey,” I interjected. “Don’t we deserve some reward? Satyavratji has already taken his rightful ‘reward’ from Swami Sivananda, won’t I get my ‘reward’ from you?” The desire to receive diksha from Swami Satyam had surfaced once again.

Swami Satyam shook his head. “Think that you have received your mantra from Swamiji as well,” he said, expressing his oft-repeated stand, and then added, “Nonetheless I will also give you ‘something’. What that is, only time will tell. You must begin sadhana to acquire wisdom, purity and power. Ma Ganga has given me a clear mandate. I will create such a towering banyan tree, whose expansive shade will offer shelter and comfort to countless suffering souls. You have sadhana to do, and so have I. Understand? Now come, let us have some hot pakoras. After that we’ll take a dip in the Ganga and all your fatigue will vanish.”

Leaving Dharasu in the morning, we reached Rishikesh by late evening. We had darshan of Ganga, then dinner. We

finally reached the ashram at 9 pm. We put our luggage in our rooms and then sat talking with some swamis by the Ganga late into the night. In the morning, we went to have Swami Sivananda's darshan. As instructed by Swami Satyam, I offered Swamiji the vessel containing water from Gangotri.

"Ohji, pour the water into my hands," he said, his face lighting up with delight, "I will do achamana." With trembling hands, I poured water into his cupped palms and Swami Sivananda touched his forehead with his hands and then drank the water. "Give this holy water to everyone. Glory to Ma Ganga. May God bless you all!"

He had us sit by his side and fed us prasad of coffee and dosa. He asked us about our journey and then told us some of his own experiences in the Himalayas and at Kailash-Mansarovar. Thereafter, we went to the Vishwanath temple and performed pooja with the sacred Gangotri water. We stayed in the ashram for two more days, listening to Swami Sivananda's satsangs, and visiting different ashrams, institutions and other places of interest in Rishikesh. We would sit by the Ganga for a while, then come to Gita Bhavan and then take a steamboat ride back to the ashram. After evening satsang, we would again sit by the Ganga for hours together.

"We have come from our grandma's place to our mother's place now," Swami Satyam said on one such occasion. "Gangotri was like our granny and we were her naughty grandchildren, playing all sorts of pranks in her lap. The Ganga here in Rishikesh is like the grave and sober mother, fully conscious of her duties and responsibilities. She can love as well as scold, according to the need of the hour . . ."

We reached Haridwar on poornima and in the evening we went to Har-ki-pauri for a bath. There were big heaps of rose petals at many places on the ghat. The pilgrims were offering flower lamps (little paper cups with a tiny rose petal dipped in ghee for a wick) to Ma Ganga. It was a sight to behold! Thousands of shining lamps and flowers were floating gently on the lapping waves.

“The only wish that these flowers have,” commented Swami Satyam, “is to go on playing like a carefree kid in the lap of Ma Ganga.”

Mata Krishnananda and Triveni left for their homes from Haridwar, but we stayed on for another week. From early morning itself we would begin our sightseeing, sometimes visiting Mansa Devi, sometimes Chandi Devi, sometimes Kanakhal. After a whole day of sightseeing, we would come to Har-ki-pauri in the evening, where we would sit for hours together, watching the arati and communing with the divine aura of the place. Soon Dr Chatterjee also departed, leaving just the four of us – Swami Satyam, Sivanjali, Satyavratji and myself. We all went to Delhi and after staying there for two or three days, the four of us proceeded to Mathura.

### **Pilgrimage to Mathura-Vrindavan**

It was the month of June and the heat of the Indian plains was unbearable. Yet we wandered through the streets of Mathura, searching for a joy that remained elusive. In the evening we reached the banks of the Yamuna, where people were enjoying boat rides. An old boatman stood next to his old, dilapidated boat. No one was coming to him for a boat ride.

“Let’s go for a ride in that old man’s boat,” Swami Satyam suggested. The local people tried to dissuade Swamiji, even Basanti objected to riding in that old, decrepit boat. But Swami Satyam said, “The ‘boat’ that we are using to cross this ocean of samsara is much older than this wooden boat. Although our ‘boat’ is broken and leaking in many places, we are hardly concerned. Yet for a ride in the Yamuna, we want a brand new boat!”

“We don’t care about which boat we are on,” said Satyavratji, “as long as you are our boatman. The entire burden of our lives is in your hands now . . .”

The old boatman was delighted to have us on his boat and he even sang some bhajans for us. Seeing the approaching nightfall, all the other boats began to return. But Swami Satyam said to the boatman, “We’ll continue the boat ride

until 9 pm. Go on rowing for another three to four miles.” The boatman was only too happy to oblige.

The dark night, a twinkling canopy of stars overhead, our lone boat floating on the blue waters and the boatman telling us the history of every old mansion or structure we happened to pass, including the ancient ruins of Kamsa’s palace . . . they were magical moments indeed. We finally returned to the shore at 9 pm.

The next day we went to Vrindavan, where we kept walking the whole day, visiting all the sacred places. Returning to Mathura, we visited all the historical places of interest there as well – Krishna’s birthplace, the old prison, the new prison; we didn’t leave an inch of the town unseen. Even after so much sightseeing we weren’t satisfied. We sat at Vishram Ghat and had discussions for hours. There were big turtles in the water and we were afraid to take a dip there. After all that sightseeing, many strange thoughts were bubbling within.

Continuously exposed to the *Gita* and the *Bhagavata* since childhood, I had formed an image of Lord Krishna’s magical Mathura in my mind. But that image turned out to be a dream, a figment of my imagination. Why was this city, the stage for the opening act in Krishna’s eventful life, the playground for his childhood lilas, so unbearably hot? Why was it scalding everyone with its searing heat?

Swami Satyam said:

This heat comes from the Gopis’ agony of separation from their beloved Krishna, from the curse of Durvasa and from the hissing of the countless cobras that reside here. The entire world is but a reflection of this city of Mathura. The atrocities of the arrogant Kamsa, the anger of Durvasa, the painful ache for the Lord and the squabbling of the priests and pundits who lay exclusive claim to Him is slowly roasting it. As soon as we enter, the full blast of its scorching winds hits us straight in the face.

All the pathways in this chimerical world are nothing but the lanes and by-lanes of Mathura. Constricted, crooked

paths can be found in the mental realm of each and every man. Our viewpoints are narrow and one-sided. Although there are many doors and windows of love in the mansion of our life, we never let anyone come in through them. Those windows stay wide open in the never-ending wait for Krishna, the divine beloved. Eventually the hot winds of lust, hatred and sorrow begin to blow in through them.

Mathura is a metaphor for your spiritual journey. It is a symbol of cruelty, anger, subjugation, selfishness and sorrowful separation. There is no place for the heavenly bride-to-be, Radha, in Mathura. O sadhakas! Widen the streets of your Mathura, make your vision broad and universal. Only then will you begin to see a glimpse of Radha and Krishna.

Perhaps that is why Krishna left Mathura and founded the city of Dwarika. As the name suggests, Dwarika must have been a city with many wide-open doors. Good-bad, drunkards-cowards – everyone was welcome there. The question of suitability did not even arise. There was no place for narrow selfishness there.

O Lord! Take us to Dwarika then, transform us into mini replicas of that wonderful city, that you may come in all forms, through all gateways, without letting any wickedness or narrowness obstruct your path. Make us broadminded and large-hearted that we may embrace ‘all the Yadavas’ in our fold. Change my vision so that I only see the positive side of actions deemed unworthy and sinful by society. Give me the strength to understand and forgive the mistakes of my friends. Instil in me the magnanimity of the Ashoka tree that gives shade equally to all people seeking it. Make me like the silvery moonbeams that fall equally on all. Take me away from Mathura and into Dwarika.

And Swami Satyam entered into a deep state of meditation . . .

### **Agra, the last destination**

After Mathura, the four of us visited Agra. We spent the entire day sightseeing and then went to see the Taj Mahal at night. We strolled around the entire complex and then sat down with eyes closed for what turned out to be over two hours. Our minds were restless and many times we were tempted to open our eyes and look around. A couple of times we did open our eyes furtively, but we closed them as quickly for we felt a bit scared. The clock chimed midnight and Swami Satyam chanted a loud 'HARI OM'. The three of us bowed and then kept looking at him.

"Taj is a symbol of love," said Swami Satyam, and after a moment's pause, continued:

On the full moon night in Gangotri, it seemed as if the moon had come down from the sky into the cradle of the Himalayas. The snow-clad mountains looked as if they had been specially decorated for the occasion. From the silent solitude of the forests came the sound of the veena, heralding joy, peace and light. The Ganga flowed in a hushed manner, as if trying to listen to the silent music of this cosmic union. The moon was the bridegroom, and the entire nature was its bride. The stars in the sky, the tall mountain peaks and the pilgrims of the Eternal Path were the members of the wedding retinue. This was the marriage of Siva and Parvati, Radha and Krishna, the individual and the cosmic spirit. Siva and Parvati had become all-pervasive in the entire universe . . .

As Tulsidas has said in the *Ramacharitamanas*: *Jaaki rahi bhaavanaa jaisee, Prabhu moorat tin dekhee taisee* – "The experience of God is shaped by the nature of one's own emotions and feelings." I had the same experience. Still I'm in love with the moon, the expansive snow, the cascading river, the steep mountain path by that river and walking alone on that path. To me, they are the genuine realities of life. One who hasn't enjoyed the natural beauty and splendour of life is a blot on this earth.

From Agra, Swami Satyam and Sivanjali will go to Delhi, from where Swami Satyam plans to go to Amarnath, while Satyavrat and Basanti will return to Nandgram.

We have now reached the last milestone of our journey. We had the rare privilege of being in Swami Satyam's company for sixty days, during which we walked across forests, mountains, caves and rivers, encountering sadhus and mahatmas, saints and sages, listening to enlightening discourses, and learning to see and live life in a simple and beautiful manner. Walking, talking, sleeping, waking, eating, drinking, laughing and playing in the company of a saint, we had left everything in his hands and become totally carefree. The memories of this journey will remain etched in our minds forever.

And our minds now rebelled at the thought of parting from Swami Satyam. "Children should bid farewell with smiles on their faces and joy in their hearts," chided Swami Satyam. "Good children understand their mother's feelings of love and affection. Two months of joyful companionship are enough for now. Whatever you have gained from these two months, keep it safe and share it with others who may also benefit. Now you have to return to the world you came from. Be careful and vigilant. Remain committed to your duties and responsibilities. Relentless effort and struggle is the key to success in life. My best wishes and God's blessings will always be with you."

Saying this Swami Satyam placed his hands on our heads and wished us all the best. He couldn't say anything more. We were of course in no position to say anything. As our train chugged off, we felt as if only our physical bodies were on the train. Our spirits had been left behind at the feet of the great saint . . .

### **Seva in downtrodden villages**

In August, Swami Satyam went to Amarnath and from there he came to Rewa. The office-bearers of Bharat Sevak Samaj had requested him to visit some of the backward rural areas of that region and teach them some useful things. Swamiji



had readily accepted their proposal. He stayed in Raipur Kalchuriyan from where he would visit the nearby villages. Every day he would cover many miles. During rains he had to walk through mud and slush. He would tell the villagers about health and hygiene, teach them how to make simple medicines using common herbs, and discuss the *Gita* and *Ramayana*. He had immense enthusiasm and zeal for this kind of work. In two months he covered sixty villages in one of the most backward regions of the state.

Swami Satyam's efforts brought about a mass awakening in the rural populace, but it also had an adverse impact on his health. When he got drenched in a downpour, he would remain in those wet clothes and go on with his work. After a while he contracted a bad cough and cold. His throat was giving him trouble, but still he didn't pay much attention. When his condition worsened he went to Delhi. He began making his own Ayurvedic medicine to treat himself. His meetings and programs continued unabated. He hardly rested, which is why his throat wasn't improving. When Hanuman Prasad Mathur and Sivanjali saw his condition worsening, they realized that he needed complete rest. They knew that only Satyavratji could manage the situation properly. So they sent Swami Satyam to Nandgram and explained the entire situation to Satyavratji on the phone.

"Don't worry," Satyavratji assured them, "everything will be all right. I will ensure that for a week he undertakes complete mouna. From next week onwards, we will have satsangs only in the evenings."

### **Stay in Nandgram**

Swami Satyam arrived in Nandgram for rest and recuperation. Satyavratji had informed only a few chosen people about his arrival. For three days, Swami Satyam took complete rest. Only we talked to him, that too if absolutely necessary. But can the fragrance of a flower or the radiance of the sun remain hidden for long? Soon other acquaintances began to trickle in and the trickle quickly turned into a flood. Satyavratji and

Basanti remained extremely vigilant to make sure Swami Satyam did not overexert himself.

Swami Satyam started evening satsangs, then began going for long morning walks. Next he started yoga classes. The children would troop in all day long. In the afternoons, there would be satsang with the ladies from 2 pm to 4 pm. In the evenings, bhajans and kirtans would start at 6.30 pm and go on till 9 pm. This would be followed by an hour long discourse.

Ratna and Manoj, both high school students, were always with Swami Satyam. It was their job to make sure that Swami Satyam spoke as little as possible. A six-year-old boy, Kirit, and two three-year-old girls, Harsha and Jyoti, also took great care of Swamiji. They would give reports of Swamiji to Basanti every minute! They never wanted to return to their homes, rather they were always concerned about what Swamiji wanted or what he wanted to do. Many times Swamiji would remark, "Such small girls and how much they fuss over me! They take such good care of me that sometimes I wonder whether my mother and sister haven't been reborn as these two little girls!" The girls wanted Swamiji to speak less and rest more. So they would get the other children to tell stories, play games or sing songs. Swami Satyam would get much-needed rest and he would also be very happy, becoming a child in the company of children.

People would come to Swami Satyam with their problems and leave with a smile on their faces. The friction between fathers and sons, husbands and wives, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law began to dissipate. Swami Satyam became the object of everyone's love and adoration. The mill employees, from the lowly clerk to the high-ranking manager, would always drop by and meet Swamiji on their way to work or on their way back. The ladies would also drop all their chores and come to pay their respects to Swamiji.

As for the children, Swamiji was their very own. Little kids would come crying to him and, burying their faces in his lap, complain, "Mother scolded us again."

"Why?"

“She keeps saying, ‘Go only after taking a bath.’ ‘Go only after having your breakfast.’ ‘Don’t go now, go later.’ ”

The older kids would complain about their schoolmates or teachers. Husbands and wives would come quarrelling over some trivial affair. Swami Satyam would sit both of them down and then sort things out. In the end he would laughingly exclaim, “That’s why I never married!”

The children would come to him and say, “Please teach us history,” or “Please teach us geography.” Children from both sides of a debating contest would come to him for guidance, note down the points he gave, practise their speeches in front of him and then leave with his blessings.

Swami Satyam had become like an intimate family member for the entire town. He stayed in Nandgram for three months and during this period ten or twelve families in the mill area never wanted to leave him alone for even a minute. In the evenings they would come over with their dinner and everyone would eat together. In the mornings, some family would invite the other families for lunch. All the families lived in bungalows with big lawns and flower-beds all around. On Sundays, everyone would gather in someone’s garden, cook lunch together, eat together and listen to Swami Satyam’s satsang together. What a great time everyone had! The maxim of *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, ‘the entire world being one’s family’, had literally come to life in this sleepy little town.

The parties and get-togethers at the Officers’ Club were also incomplete without Swami Satyam’s presence. He would be invited there along with the ladies and children, and he would conduct satsang there. Time was flying by. Swami Satyam’s satsangs and classes were being conducted in many different places. Programs were made for schools and colleges, and in the nearby rural areas. People would come in groups from Durg, Raipur, Bhilai and Nagpur, stay for a couple of days, attend Swami Satyam’s programs and then plan similar programs in their own cities and towns.

Plans were made for a week-long camp in Amarkantak during May of 1958. From there, Swami Satyam was supposed to

go to Rewa and then on to Rishikesh, Badrinath and Kedarnath. A great awakening had taken place in the villages of Rewa district. A plan for setting up a handloom unit had also been chalked out. The owners wanted Swami Satyam to come and inaugurate it. At their behest, he left for Rewa on 27th February where he ended up staying for four months. When Krishna left Gokul for Mathura, not just man or beast but even shrubs and trees were shedding tears. A similar scene was witnessed in Nandgram at the departure of Swami Satyam for Rewa . . .

### **Journey to Amarkantak**

In May 1958, Satyavratji, Basanti, Manoj and Swami Narayananda of Farhad left for Amarkantak. Swami Satyam was still in Rewa. He met us at the Pendara Road station. Amarkantak is one hour away from there and we went there by bus. Some other devotees were expected to join us later.

We stayed at a dharmashala in Amarkantak. In the mornings we would go for a bath in the Narmada, then practise meditation, sing bhajans and kirtans and listen to Swami Satyam's satsangs. In the afternoons, we would walk in the jungles, hills and caves, looking at the ancient artefacts in Sonbhadra and Bhrgu Kamandal. Daily we would stroll in Mai ki Mahima and Bagiya, and listen to ancient tales and stories. After taking a bath in the Narmada in the evenings, we would sit on its bank for hours together. After dinner, Swami Satyam would give satsang at the dharmashala to packed audiences.

Although we saw many beautiful hills, forests and caves, somehow it couldn't recreate the magic of the Himalayas. But we experienced great peace and serenity by the Narmada and in Mai ki mahima. A week flew by in the twinkling of an eye. We decided to spend our last day sightseeing, as we had to leave for Rewa the next morning. In the evening we received a message from Mahasamund that the wedding date of Satyavratji's niece, Kiran, had been finalized and the wedding preparations were starting in two days. We were asked to come as soon as possible.

After the evening satsang, we sat down to discuss our future program. “Both of you must go to Mahasamund,” Swami Satyam told us with an air of finality.

“We will go together till Bilaspur tomorrow,” I ventured another proposal. “From there Manoj and I will proceed to Raipur and then on to Nandgram. My things there are ready. After staying at home for a day, I’ll leave the next day at noon for Raipur and reach Mahasamund by evening to participate in the wedding preparations. No one will notice Satyavratji’s absence. He should definitely go with you to Badri-Kedar as originally planned. Please take him with you.” After a lot of pleading and cajoling, Swamiji agreed to my proposal. Two weddings were taking place in the mill area as well. I got Swamiji to write his blessings on their invitation cards also.

The next day Manoj and I got off at Bilaspur, and caught the train to Raipur. Everyone else was proceeding towards Rewa via Shahdol. We reached Nandgram at 2 pm and after meeting friends and acquaintances, and spending a day at home, the next day we left at 12 pm. When we reached Raipur at 2 pm, we were taken aback to see Satyavratji waiting for us at the station!

“Last night at Shahdol,” he explained, “Swamiji had suddenly remarked, ‘You must go to Mahasamund. Your brother-in-law is no more and if you don’t attend your niece’s wedding, your sister will be very sad and hurt. So I won’t take you with me to Badri-Kedar this time. You have to do a lot of work for me here anyway.’ So saying, Swamiji sent me back and himself caught the train to Rewa.” Such is Swamiji, sensible, sensitive and compassionate.

From Rewa, Swami Satyam went on to Rishikesh, Badrinath and Kedarnath with Swami Narayananda. He had some special experiences there. He returned with the blessings of the divine energies of that sacred region. With his guru’s blessings, he went on a pilgrimage from Rishikesh to Rameshwaram, and from there he came to Nandgram in July and stayed with us for a week. He planned to spend chaturmas

in Swami Narayanananda's village, Farhad, situated five kilometres away from Nandgram on Nagpur Road.

After he began his chaturmas in Farhad, Swami Satyam would come to Nandgram every Saturday evening, conduct satsang for two days and then return to Farhad on Monday morning. Sometimes Swami Satyam would come by bullockcart, at other times Satyavratji would bring him on his motorcycle and then drop him back on Monday morning. While he was at our place, people from the mill and the town would keep coming to meet him.

### **My initiation**

After the darshan of Ma Ganga at Gangotri, the desire to have a guru mantra had arisen in my mind. Sitting by the Narmada in Amarkantak, that desire resurfaced and kept increasing in intensity. When I spoke to Swami Satyam about it, he said, "There is only one guru, and he is Swami Sivananda. You are coming to Rishikesh anyway. Take mantra diksha and then proceed to Badri-Kedar."

"But Swami Sivananda told me that I will get initiated at my own home," I protested. Destiny had something else in store for us. We had to return from Amarkantak itself and the trip to Badri-Kedar never materialized.

I started doing regular sadhana. I would give yoga classes and teach others as well. But whenever I sat for meditation, I would get restive for a guru mantra. Discussing the matter with Swami Satyam was useless. He would always say, "Swami Sivananda is the only guru. You will have to go to Rishikesh again. As for me, I will never become a guru or build an ashram. I will wander like a mendicant for twelve years and then perhaps live in Gangotri." I kept propitiating benign deities that my wish for a guru mantra from Swami Satyam would come true.

Swami Satyam had received the blessings and commands of divine entities in the Himalayas. Gurudev's blessings were always there for the asking. Swami Satyam was himself doing a lot of sadhana during chaturmas. He must have received

an inner inspiration or command, because when he came on the weekend of 24th August, he gave discourses and satsangs for two days as usual, but before leaving on Monday morning, he said, “I will come at 5 am on Thursday, the 29th. Make special arrangements, especially for the prasad.” Everyone was staring at him while he was laughing. I finally asked, “What is so special about the 29th that you are asking me to make all these preparations?”

“It is the day of your rebirth,” Swami Satyam said with a laugh, “and so you must call everyone.”

“I will keep everything ready, but do the final preparations only when you come,” I said, still not sure about his intentions.

29th August was a full moon day, and as he had promised, Swami Satyam arrived early in the morning. The necessary arrangements were quickly completed, all my friends and acquaintances were invited and they quickly came over. Bhajans and kirtans continued for some time and then a havan was conducted during which I received mantra diksha. For fifteen minutes the chant of the mantra *Om Sri Ramachandraaya Namah* went on continuously. Everyone was pleasantly surprised by the fact that not only had Swamiji given me the mantra in public, he had also asked me (and everyone present) to repeat the mantra aloud.

“Swamiji, the usual practice is to whisper the mantra in the ear of the aspirant, to the loud accompaniment of conches and bells,” Mrs Rama Dandekar commented, “What to speak of others, even the aspirant doesn’t hear or understand the mantra properly. For the first time in my life I am seeing and understanding things in a different light. On behalf of everyone I would like to say something. Can I and the other ladies here who don’t have a guru, also get your blessings and a mala like Basanti?”

“The human mind receives all kind of impressions, good and bad,” said Swami Satyam, “and these impressions produce their effects in due course of time. The impressions

received from satsangs and the repetition of God's name lead the mind into a state of God-intoxication and transcendental bliss. Whenever there is a discussion about guru and diksha, you will remember today's initiation ceremony." Then he added, "Those of you who consider yourselves to be the recipients of today's diksha along with Basanti can give their names to Satyavratji. Satyavratji will get malas for you from Rishikesh which I'll then give to you."

"Some gentlemen would also like to receive this privilege. Can we also give our names?" asked Krishna Shankar Dev. "We treat you as our guru anyway, but the credit for cementing this relationship goes to Satyavrat bhai and Basanti didi. They are the actual bridges between Nandgram and Rishikesh." Then he added, "Swamiji, Meena Dave says that you are the little Swamiji and Satyavrat uncle is the big Swamiji, for one tends to be a little afraid of him."

"Meena is right," laughed Swami Satyam. "I'm the little Swamiji, just an ordinary spiritual worker. But Satyavratji is definitely the big Swamiji, for he keeps planning grand programs day and night. Sometimes when I am bothered by it all, I threaten to go to the jungles; but his grip on me is so strong that I'm unable to break free. That's why I consider this place as my Sarnath. And now Basanti has gone even one step ahead. I never wanted to be a guru, but now that I've become one, instead of getting one disciple I've got so many in one go!"

He continued, "Today your Basanti didi has become Ma Dharmashakti. She needs your blessings so that she may prove herself true to her name. 'Satya' and 'Dharma' will be the wheels on which the chariot of my yoga movement will fly. May God and Gurudev bless us all."

For two days we had inspiring satsangs with Swamiji. The 30th was the day of Rakhi, everyone felt joyous and excited. People were saying, "From now on we won't call this place Basanti didi's house, but Satyadham." At everyone's insistent request to come again for satsang, Swami Satyam said, "The 7th September is the auspicious day of Krishnashtami, and



8th September is Swami Sivananda's birthday. I will come on the evening of the 6th and leave on the morning of the 9th." Swamiji's visits always carried an air of joy and celebration. This time two special events were coinciding with his visit. Everyone was filled with a sense of joyful anticipation. The boys prepared a skit and the girls a Raas-garbha dance for Swamiji's visit.

At 2 pm on the afternoon of the 5th, Swami Narayananda came and said, "Swamiji won't come tomorrow evening."

"Why not?" I asked. "What reason has he given?"

"Perhaps he's a little cross. He has said that he won't come for a month." So saying, Swami Narayananda left for Navagaon.

I couldn't figure out the reason behind Swamiji's sudden change of heart. I was utterly confused. Finally I sat down in front of his picture in my meditation room and asked, "Are you really annoyed with us Swamiji? But nothing of the sort has happened. Last time you had said that you would come on the 6th. Then why this sudden change of plan? You are not only our guru, but our father as well, and as your children we have the right to demand what is rightfully ours."

My next door neighbour also came over when she heard the news. Everyone was disturbed. Finally it was decided that a letter be written to Swamiji to find out the real reason. We wanted to make sure that it wasn't any of the old swami's mischief. The letter was written and sent with the mill peon.

The work at the mill ran in three shifts. The first shift was from 6.30 am to 3 pm, the second was from 2.30 pm to 10 pm and the third from 10.30 pm to 5 am. Workers came on bicycles from places as far as ten to twelve kilometres away. Thirty or forty workers used to come from Farhad as well.

Swami Satyam sent his reply through the same peon, who delivered the letter at 3.30 pm and went off to his shift at the mill. In the letter, Swamiji had written:

*Dharmashakti,*

*Returning here after your initiation, I decided to stay in one place for a month and not go anywhere. The old swami was going your way so I asked him to convey this message, clearly explaining the reasons and circumstances. Now I am beginning to think that the old man created some mischief, and you are worrying on that count. But remember, I'm a man of fluid decisions and promises. I break them as easily as I make them . . .*

*I am everywhere. The body can only stay in one place at a time but I am all-pervasive. Never doubt this truth. Beyond the delusion of the body lies the vision of Atma. Whilst your eyes see only the body, you will not be able to see the principle that animates it.*

*There is something beyond my body, on account of which I exist and am perceived by everyone else. That is pure consciousness. It is everywhere. It can assume a form and materialize in front of you. That is called chinmaya vigraha, the form of consciousness. We should strive to look beyond the gross, physical bodies and perceive the eternal, conscious being that dwells within. And when That is perceived, I can be with you not just on the eighth of the month, but every day, nay, every moment.*

*But for that you have to practise. Knowing is one thing, doing another. Practise alone leads to perfection. Now that you know the way, why this delay? Start immediately. Satsang with me must lead you to atma sanga, communion with your own spirit. There is no difference at the level of the spirit. Knowing this don't get infatuated with mere physical appearance. If you still desire my physical presence, then send Satyavratji on the evening of the 6th. I will come after sunset and leave before sunrise the next day. Make special preparations for satsang and prasad. Till then, goodbye.*

—Satyam

On the evening of the 6th, Satyavratji went to Farhad to fetch Swamiji. We were waiting on tenterhooks. When Swami Satyam finally arrived at 6 pm, it was nothing less than the arrival of God himself. Lots of people had gathered at our place. After pooja, bhajan, kirtan and prasad, Swami Satyam visited all the neighbouring bungalows. At one place he conducted bhajan and kirtan, at another place gave a discourse, and at yet another place exchanged light, friendly banter. The whole night he kept on moving from house to house, conducting satsangs and bhajans. All of us accompanied him throughout the night. At 4 am he returned to our place and took a bath. In the meantime, I made some hot pakoras and tea. Everyone had them for breakfast and then walked some distance to see Swami Satyam off.

### **Establishment of Divine Life Society branch at Nandgram**

A plan was on the anvil to open a branch of the Divine Life Society in Nandgram. We received the necessary approval from Rishikesh with the assurance that we would receive the relevant documents and other ashram literature by the next month. After the evening satsang on 8th September, it was also decided to acquire a small house to conduct weekly bhajan, kirtan and satsang sessions and start a small library. Discourses by eminent saints and swamis would also be arranged at this centre.

All the preparations were completed by October. From Rishikesh, we received a copy of the registration documents of the Divine Life Society, a letter conveying the blessings of Swami Sivananda, and loads of books, magazines and pamphlets.

Swami Satyam asked us to start preparations for a three-day convention in November. News about the upcoming convention was published in local dailies and pamphlets. On the inaugural day, Swami Satyam spoke about the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh and formally inaugurated its Nandgram branch. After the speech of the chief guest, Sri K.L. Shukla, Swami Sivananda's benedictory letter was read out. Hindus,

Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Christians, Buddhists, representatives of all faiths and religions spoke on the occasion. Swami Atmananda from Ramakrishna Mission, Raipur, also gave a discourse. Four sessions were conducted every day, including a morning asana and pranayama class. Swami Satyam and representatives of different religions gave discourses during each session. Participants had come from as far as Durg, Bhilai, Raipur and Gondia.

A yoga fellowship for women was also established. After the convention, a managing committee was constituted for the newly opened branch. Everyone in the committee was in favour of publishing a ten to twelve page magazine containing the activities of the branch and the satsangs and upcoming programs of Swami Satyam. After taking due permission from Rishikesh ashram, the magazine started coming out under the name *Divine Life Message*. Having jump-started the activities of the new branch, Swami Satyam proceeded to Bombay.

In December, Swami Satyam visited Burhanpur and Indore. From there he returned to Nandgram via Khamgaon. He oversaw the activities of the Divine Life Society branch, and after giving a satsang program, he proceeded to Mahasamund. After conducting a three-day program there, he went on to Raigarh and from there to Delhi.

He wanted to start publishing books. In his next letter he wrote, "Make a file of all the English manuscripts and get it typed. When I come there next, I'll look at the file and tell you what to do next."

Satyavratji's workload had increased significantly. Besides his office work, he was looking after the programs and activities of the Divine Life Society branch and its library, arranging Swami Satyam's programs, handling his correspondence and filing the manuscripts of his speeches. Yet everything was proceeding smoothly. A plan was made again for a trip to Badri-Kedar, for which the necessary preparations were also completed.

## **Special sadhana shivir**

In January, Swami Satyam went to Raipur-Rewa. From there he went to Katrasgarh and Chhapra to conduct programs. After the programs he returned to Raipur-Rewa. He was planning to stay there for two months. He wrote to us, “Make arrangements for a retreat in a secluded rural area sometime during May. The two of you and myself have a lot of special sadhana to accomplish. We will definitely go to Badri-Kedar in 1960. Seth Radha Kishan has a nice, isolated garden in his village. Try to arrange that place for the retreat.”

On the auspicious occasion of Holi, I sent Swami Satyam a garland and some gulal. His reply was enlightening:

Received your letter and gifts, but my Holi has not come yet. When my sadhana is complete I will be truly coloured. Satyavrat and Basanti, I will colour you with the colour of the black one (Krishna), that you may forever remain engrossed in His remembrance. I will smear you with the colour of bhakti, dip you in the colour of sadhana, intoxicate you with His name and wash you in the waters of His memory. You have only seen the Holi that colours the body, now colour your mind and see the fun!

Bhagawati Babu’s village, Pathan Dhodgi, was finally chosen for the retreat. His family were old landlords of the region and Satyavratji had visited his place many times. It was situated in a desolate jungle, but only the first four miles were hard to traverse. In the summers one could go by bullock cart but in the rainy season one could only go by bicycle or on foot. Bhagawati Babu had requested Swami Satyam many times to visit his place. It had everything one could ask for – a huge house, a big retinue of servants, and all the necessary amenities.

Swami Satyam would be accompanied by only seven people – Vishwaprem and her uncle, Harsinghani, Satyavratji and his sister Annapoorna, and Basanti, her younger sister Ratna and her friend Bharati. Swami Satyam did not want a

big crowd there, although local villagers would be welcome for satsangs on the weekend.

Swami Satyam came to Nandgram in April, and in May we went to Bhagawati Babu's village. We travelled thirty miles by bus till Bandha Bazaar. There two bullock-carts had come to pick us up. Traversing four miles through dense jungle, we finally reached Pathan Dhodgi. We had a tour of the entire house and after lunch we settled ourselves into our rooms. Then we went for a walk in the jungle. The hills and the streams reminded us of the Himalayas. Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, this place seemed to be a haven of peace and tranquillity. In the evening, the villagers would chant the *Ramayana* and other bhajans and kirtans.

The retreat began from the next morning: asana, pranayama, bhajan, kirtan, japa, dhyana followed by a question and answer session. After lunch, we would rest. Then at 2 pm, we would read Swami Sivananda's book *Sadhana* and have satsang with Swami Satyam. Then we would go for a walk. After dinner, there would be a discourse on the *Gita*, *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavata*. All the villagers would gather for the discourse. They would listen attentively and even ask a few questions at the end. They were quite impressed by the depth and breadth of Swami Satyam's knowledge. Soon they started treating him like their father. They would invite their relatives and acquaintances from nearby villages, saying, "A great, wise saint has come to our village. He is more than a hundred years old but looks like a young man. God Himself appears before him and gives him the knowledge he needs. You must all come for his darshan. Your life will be blessed."

Everyone's sadhana began progressing along paths directed by Swami Satyam. I would practise most of the asanas, including sirshasana, the headstand. Swami Satyam took a good look at my headstand and told me to practise it for five minutes. Then he instructed me to perform *purascharana*, mantra sadhana. I had to complete japa of one hundred and fifty malas daily. He gave me detailed instructions for the purascharana – how much time to spend in japa, how much

time in rest, and so on. He anointed me with a chandan tilak and, giving me his blessings, told me to begin my purascharana. On the first day, the japa finished by 10 pm. I continued the japa the next day. On the third day, an intense, flaming light emerged from the meditation picture. The light periodically increased and subsided in intensity. Soon the heat became unbearable and I could no longer continue my japa. On the fourth day, the light became stronger. I experienced great heat and discomfort. Suddenly a wave of fear swept through me. I started crying and went to tell Swamiji about it. He told me to rest for an hour and then recommence my practice. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't finish even one mala that day. Then Swamiji told me to practise japa in the company of others, not by myself. Even then, the moment I would close my eyes, I would begin to experience strange things. Finally Swami Satyam said, "Terminate your anushthana. Just do *likhit japa*, mantra writing, and *swadhyaya*, self-study." Even that proved hard to do. I would begin to cry uncontrollably as soon as I started any practice. In the end he told me to stop everything.

One day Vishwaprem suddenly developed a high fever. She was a city girl and this sudden bout of sickness in unfamiliar, rural surroundings frightened and unsettled her. "Come on," Swami Satyam would chide her now and then, "give me your fever and get well again." Everyone would laugh at this innocuous remark. Swami Satyam gave her some homeopathic medicines as well. By late night her fever had completely disappeared!

But by next morning Swami Satyam had a high fever! He could neither open his eyes, nor drink any water or tea. Somehow Satyavratji managed to feed him three or four spoonfuls of tea, but he vomited all of it. He even vomited the homeopathic medicine administered to him. Satyavratji started massaging his legs and feet. Normally Swami Satyam never let anyone touch his feet, but today he didn't say anything.

Annapoorna and I thought that it must have been due to the villagers' evil eye. We decided to use chillies to ward

off the evil eye. But we were afraid that Satyavratji would get annoyed if he found out. I called Satyavratji outside on some pretext. In the meantime, Annapoorna hurriedly brought some salt and chillies, waved them over Swami Satyam, and keeping the villagers in mind, dumped the chillies into the stove. Wonder of wonders! Shortly thereafter Swami Satyam spoke a few sentences for the first time. We were quite pleased with the outcome of our ‘experiment’ and kept repeating it every half hour or so. In the meantime Swami Satyam drank some water, sipped a little tea, took some medicines also and kept talking to us. By 3 pm we had done our ‘chilli-magic’ seven times. As evening approached, Swamiji said, “Let’s go for a little walk outside. You people do the talking, I’ll keep on listening.” We were overjoyed to see these signs of a miraculous recovery. We cracked jokes, told stories and kept Swami Satyam entertained. And from the next day, the retreat routine restarted.

For the next four days, regular japa, dhyana, bhajan, kirtan and satsang on *Bhagavata* and *Ramayana* continued uninterruptedly. The fifteen-day retreat finally came to a close and everyone returned to Nandgram. The next day Vishwaprem and her uncle left Nandgram for Bombay.

The matriculation exams were going on in Nandgram. Only a couple of papers were remaining. One of our acquaintances, Manju Babaria, developed a high fever overnight. Her mother came crying to our home, “Only her last paper is remaining. What will happen if she isn’t able to sit for her exam today?”

“Don’t worry,” Swami Satyam consoled her. “Everything will be all right. Get her here in a rickshaw.”

The girl was brought to our place. She had very high fever. Swami Satyam gently whispered to her, “Give your fever to me. Drink some coffee and you’ll be well in no time.” And then patting her on the head, he told her to do well in her exam and sent her to school with her brother. By afternoon, Swami Satyam had developed a high fever!









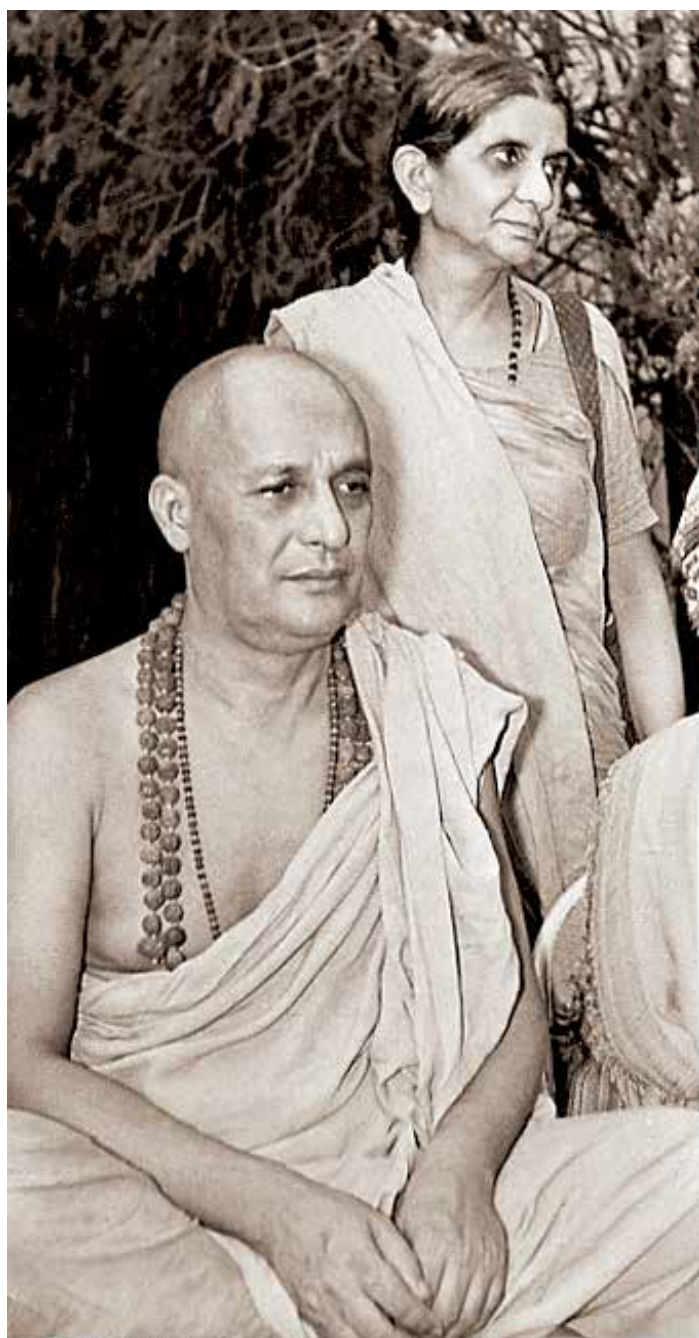














All sorts of thoughts flashed through my mind. At a suitable moment, I called Satyavratji aside and told him, “Swamiji had said the same thing to Vishwaprem in the village. She had recovered immediately and he had contracted her sickness. Today also he uttered the same words and now look, he has developed high fever. There we had to use chillies seven times . . .” and I told him everything.

Satyavratji was very annoyed when he learnt about our ‘chilli-magic’. “That was the wrong thing to do. Haven’t you realized the calibre of Swamiji yet? He will start getting well by tonight and by morning he will be perfectly all right. Tomorrow you must tell him about your stupid folly and seek his forgiveness.”

The next evening when everyone was sitting together, I confessed everything in front of Swamiji – how we had thought his fever to be the result of the villagers’ evil-eye and how we had put salt and chillies in the fire with the villagers in mind. Swami Satyam got a little annoyed at first but then he started to laugh. “Why didn’t you tell me then?” he exclaimed, his eyes twinkling with amusement. “I would have also liked to see and learn how one catches and gets rid of the evil eye. I would have also driven away many ghosts . . .”

Swami Satyananda still mentions this incident now and then, though it is decades old by now. “There is definitely some truth to what they say about the evil eye,” he says with a chuckle. “Once it happened to me as well. Dharmashakti had to use quite a few chillies to get me well again!”

A week later he left for Mt Abu, where he had some respite from the dreadful summer heat. Swami Satyam spent his childhood in Almora and then he spent many years in Rishikesh. As he travels through the vast plains of central India now, it is the heat that bothers him the most. In Nandgram, the heat from the nearby mill sends the mercury soaring even higher. That is why he keeps making plans for trips to the Himalayas. Sometimes Gangotri, sometimes Badri-Kedar, sometimes an unknown destination . . .

## **Chaturmas in Bandha Bazaar**

Swami Satyam had decided to spend his upcoming chaturmas in Bandha Bazaar. He came to Nandgram in July and stayed for a week during which he oversaw all the programs and activities. He went through the correspondence files and gave the necessary instructions regarding future programs and events. Four days before Guru Poornima, Seth Radha Kishan came to fetch Swami Satyam. Satyavratji accompanied him and returned the next day.

On the morning of Guru Poornima, Satyavrat and Dharmashakti went to Bandha Bazaar. The road was quite dilapidated, breached at many places by streams and rivulets. It took over two hours to cover the thirty odd miles to Bandha Bazaar. Seth Radha Kishan's orchard was a further kilometre away from the village. There was a two-roomed garden-house in the middle of the orchard, with a veranda on both sides. A well was located nearby. The walls of the house were draped with the branches and leaves of bel trees, giving it the appearance of a rishi's hut. A gardener and a watchman lived by the entrance. Swami Satyam had taken a sankalpa to begin special sadhana from the day of Ekadashi itself. He would not go anywhere during the next four months, and would practise mouna throughout the day. In the evening, at around 6 pm, Seth Radha Kishan and others would come, at which time he would break his mouna and have satsang with them. By 8.30 pm everyone would leave, and he would recommence his mouna. During the first two months he planned to have only fruits once a day and then one meal a day for the next two months.

Satyavrat and Dharmashakti arrived there by 9 am. They talked with Swami Satyam for a while and then Dharmashakti asked about guru pooja. "Let's go to that little hill behind us," suggested Swami Satyam. "There is a small Hanuman temple up there. We'll sit and talk there." The hill was really a huge rock on top of which the temple and a small square courtyard had been built. There was also a small pond nearby. About forty-five steps led up to the temple.

After reaching the temple, Swami Satyam sat down on the steps and Satyavrat and Dharmashakti conducted his pooja. Swami Satyam remained seated with eyes closed throughout. After finishing the pooja, they sat down at his feet and closed their eyes in meditation. Dharmashakti had an extraordinary experience. She felt as if a bright light had emerged from Swami Satyam and spread all over her. The heat from the intense light left her perspiring profusely. She had to cover her eyes with both hands to block the dazzling light. And then Swamiji burst out laughing.

“Give us prasad,” Satyavratji broke the silence, “we are all hungry.” Dharmashakti noticed that the light had disappeared as soon as Swami Satyam laughed. They all shared the prasad and conversed for a while. Satyavrat and Dharmashakti had to leave by 3 pm, so they could return home by 5 pm, where all the children would be eagerly waiting to receive Swami Satyam’s prasad. As they were leaving, Swami Satyam asked, “You are doing your asanas regularly, aren’t you? All right, continue with sirshasana as well.”

Swami Satyam’s sadhana continued without a break. Satyavratji would go there every Saturday with relevant letters and files, stay there on Sunday and return on Monday morning.

Every day Seth Radha Kishan himself would come at 4 pm with tea, fruits and dried fruits. Swami Satyam would have a little and distribute the rest as prasad. Two months passed in this way. Then he started having one meal in the evenings. Mouna and sadhana continued uninterruptedly.

In November, the foundation day of the Nandgram branch of the Divine Life Society was to be celebrated. Satyavratji made all the arrangements after consulting with Swami Satyam. Whenever Satyavratji came to visit him, Swami Satyam would ask, “Why did Dharmashakti not come?” And Satyavratji would reply, “I had asked her to come but . . .” I myself wanted to come, but there was a certain hesitation. Nonetheless I continued with my asanas and all the household chores.

In November, Swami Satyam came for the first anniversary celebrations of the Divine Life Society branch held at the town

hall. The entire function was conducted along the lines of the previous year's program. Hundreds of people came to attend the program. Representatives of different religions spoke about their respective faiths. Satyavrajji's sister, Annapoorna, had also come to attend the program. She understood the situation and told Swamiji about my condition. Swamiji had a hearty laugh . . .

"Are you still doing your asanas? Sirshasana as well?" he teased me. Then he instructed me, "All right, from now on only do pawanmuktasana and sukh poorvak pranayama. Go for long walks in the mornings and evenings. Read good and inspiring literature. Think about Kaushalya's Rama and Yashoda's Krishna, and live a restrained and disciplined life." Turning to Annapoorna he said, "You will have to stay with Dharmashakti from January." He left for Bombay soon after.

Endowed with the blessings of Ma Ganga and his Poojya Gurudev, Swami Satyam had showered his grace upon a disciple who had been yearning for a son, and himself performed rigorous sadhana for invoking an extraordinary spirit who would shoulder the responsibility of his mission and carry it forward by leaps and bounds. With the blessings of the divine forces and the grace of a great guru, the sankalpa manifested . . .

### **Birth of Swami Niranjan**

In the early morning of 14th February 1960, a beautiful baby announced his arrival in this world. Swami Satyam was in Bombay at the time. That day he told Vishwaprem, "The one I have been waiting for has finally arrived. Today we will receive a telegram of his birth." On 20th March, Swami Satyam came to Nandgram. Taking the little boy in his lap and blessing him, he said:

The light of God has descended in the form of this child to illuminate the darkest corners of this earth. He has been born through a pure, divine sankalpa. He hasn't come merely to be your cuddly son. He has come to fulfil

a grand purpose and mission. All of us owe him a debt of duty and responsibility. He will not like any fawning or over-attachment. We have to prepare him for the great task he has come to undertake, a task that will involve countless other souls.

He is an embodiment of divine light and he has come with the requisite ingredients. Water this young seedling with the holy name of Rama, and in the course of time, this precious flower will spread its divine fragrance throughout the world. Dharmashakti, you had asked for a suitable name for the child, and so I say: He is 'Niranjan' and let your mahamantra be:

*Mantra satyam, pooja satyam, satyam devo niranjanam  
Gurorvaakyam sadaa satyam, satyameva param padam.*

### **Publication of books**

Swami Satyam stayed for a few days in Nandgram and then visited Bhilai, Raipur, Bilaspur and Raigarh. From there he proceeded to Bombay. Towards the end of June, he came to Neemgaon, where he spent two months of chaturmas. In September he returned to Nandgram. All the arrangements for the publication of his books had been completed. He looked at the files, rearranged the matter and finally in October 1960, the first three books of his mission were printed at the Desh Seva Press in Allahabad. The first one was *Lessons on Yoga, Part I*, a two hundred and sixty page book containing letters to Vishwaprem and Satyavrat. The book turned out to be very popular; the readers felt as if the letters were addressed straight to them. The other two books were in Hindi, *Kurukshetra kee ladaai* and *Yoga Asana*, each containing about fifty to sixty pages.

Many people were becoming Swami Satyam's disciples. He had started all alone, but his caravan kept on increasing. Requests for his programs poured in from many places. A three-to-four-day program was organized in steel city Bhilai every now and then. Durg, Raipur and Bilaspur were

other places where his programs were frequently organized. Everyone wanted Swami Satyam to build an ashram in their respective towns and cities. But he remained evasive on the issue. Satyavrati wanted Swami Satyam to settle down in Rajnandgaon. He had even acquired a piece of land in Nagpur Road on the outskirts of the city. Swami Satyam, however, said, "I have no desire to start an ashram right now. First you have to get more and more books published."

The entire world is Swami Satyam's family and he makes no distinction between friends and strangers. This was the mandate given to him by his guru, and it is now his sankalpa to help those people running in vain after the mirage of happiness in the desert of life. It is with this aim in mind that he is guiding and shepherding all the rudderless souls that he comes in contact with.

The world is a vast, wide stage and man a tiny actor upon it. Swami Satyam once went to Raigarh after conducting a program in Bilaspur. It was sometime in the year 1956. He didn't know anyone in Raigarh at the time. Raigarh is a town of rich merchants and businessmen. Swami Satyam had come with nothing save a tattered bag slung over his shoulder. He walked around in the town till late afternoon, but no one even bothered to speak to him. "Maybe everyone is quite busy here," he thought. "I'll have to take the lead in initiating a conversation." He stood outside a big shop and loudly called out, "Hari Om". The haughty shop owner harshly rebuked him and told him to get lost. Saying "Hari Om", Swami Satyam moved on. Hunger and thirst were tormenting him, but his mind was immersed in ajapa japa.

There was a small church off that street. From there an old priest saw this radiant, young sannyasin. He came up to Swami Satyam and asked, "Would you like some tea?" "Sure," Swami Satyam replied. There was a small hotel nearby, from where the father got him some tea and biscuits.

Soon Swami Satyananda's name and fame spread in the region via the medium of newspapers. Learning about his programs in Shakti and Bilaspur, the people of Raigarh

wrote a letter to Swami Satyam, requesting him to come and conduct a program there. “I must go there,” Swami Satyam told us. “Finalize the dates.” A program was eventually chalked out. “I won’t let you go there alone. I’ll accompany you,” said Satyavratji. “I don’t trust the people of Raigarh.” He accompanied Swami Satyam to Raigarh where a very successful three-day program was conducted. Later on the people of Raigarh became his devotees and disciples in large numbers, and started pestering him to build an ashram there. Swami Satyam initially refused, but in the end the people had their way and had an ashram built. As chance would have it, the ashram is only a few paces away from the shop, church and hotel where Swami Satyam had his first ‘taste’ of Raigarh . . .

### **Outwitting his opponents**

An interesting incident took place in Nandgram as well. It was the month of October in the year 1958. Swami Satyam was undergoing chaturmas in Farhad village at the time. The office-bearers of Shankar Bhavan Bal Samaj had requested Swami Satyam to give discourses on 20th and 21st September, the days of the Ganesha festival, and Swami Satyam had consented. But when they went to pick him up, he said, “I won’t come. I don’t like needless pomp and show, not to mention vain competitions. That is what these programs have been reduced to. If I go there, I might end up saying things which will ruffle many people’s feathers. So it’s better not to go.” And he didn’t.

During the Durga festival of Navaratri, when the Bal Samaj people again entreated him, Swami Satyam agreed to give a discourse. After finalizing the date, the event was heavily publicized. Swami Satyam came on the appointed night and after having a round of the ‘Navaratri shows’ put up throughout the town, he arrived at Shankar Bhavan. A huge crowd started gathering in front of Shankar Bhavan to listen to the discourse. The discourse began at 9 pm. The crowd must have numbered more than twenty thousand. They were all listening intently to Swamiji.

During his discourse, Swami Satyam gradually brought up the subject close to his heart:

Today the world is madly running after pompous shows and even dragging the gods and goddesses into this mad race. You treat Durga as the Divine Mother, but think nothing about wasting ten or twelve thousand rupees in needless pomp and decoration. The Mother doesn't like such showiness one bit. All children are equal in her eyes. She wants everyone to live together and share whatever they have. You waste so much money for the sake of show, competition, name and fame, while the living Durga is ignored and insulted. My Durga roams about in rags, does back-breaking labour for a living, picks cow-dung off the streets so she can cook her single meal of the day, and at the end of the day is scorned by the very society she serves! The Mother says, 'I don't need this fancy show and decoration, do something for these hapless ladies instead . . .'

The crowd was greatly moved by Swamiji's speech. But some narrow-minded people and a few conceited pundits didn't like Swamiji's remarks and they raised objections. An argument ensued with some hot-headed youths taking Swamiji's side. In the end, the pundits challenged Swamiji to a scriptural debate over the issue. "Fine," replied Swami Satyam, "we will talk about this tomorrow."

The next day large scale preparations were made for the forthcoming debate which was greatly publicized. A big stage was erected with loudspeakers all around so that people far away could also listen to the debate. By evening thirty or thirty-five thousand people had gathered there. At 9 pm the program started. The pundits began presenting their arguments with statements like, "Such and such a thing is written in this section of the Vedas." And Swami Satyam would respond, "Yes, so it is. But then isn't it also written that . . ." and he would explain his point in such simple and lucid Sanskrit that everyone



present was left speechless in disbelief. He spoke with great authority, quoting extensively from the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, the *Bhagavata*, the *Gita* and the *Ramayana*. Faced with his convincing and irrefutable arguments and his command over classical Sanskrit, the pundits developed cold feet. The debate must have lasted for an hour and a half, after which the pundits surrendered. They announced that they were gladly accepting defeat at the hands of Swami Satyananda, the illustrious disciple of the great Swami Sivananda, and offered their pranams at his feet.

“I am but a child in front of erudite scholars like you,” replied Swami Satyam humbly. “Anyway, it is God’s will that always prevails. I offer my respectful pranams at the feet of all my worthy ‘opponents’.”

The air was rent with shouts of jubilation and slogans of praise. Children and adults alike were jumping with joy. Swami Satyam began singing the bhajan *Agad Bam* and the children started such an energetic Tandava dance that everyone began jumping and dancing. What a scene it was!

Swami Satyananda is like a child amongst children, grave amidst adults, a selfless karma yogi amongst the poor illiterate villagers, simple and down-to-earth amidst commoners and a thinker and orator par excellence among scholars. Amongst devotees he is a bhajan-kirtan *samraat* or adept, and for sadhakas he is an accomplished yogacharya. For the bewildered souls of this world, he is a beacon of light, who knows the three periods of time like the lines on his hands. He prefers to remain nameless and fameless in the background, but is at the forefront in offering respect and honour to others. His learning is vast and deep, but much more valuable is his zeal for service and his tireless efforts to uplift others. Gauging the needs and requirements of present-day society, he has moulded his life in such a manner that he easily and effortlessly wins everyone’s heart. For him both children and aged, men and women – all are embodiments of that Absolute God. He sees the same spirit in everyone, and doesn’t discriminate between people. Just as a mother

loves all her children equally, so is Swami Satyananda's love impartial and universal.

In November, Swami Satyam travelled to Gondia for a five-day program. From there he went to Bombay, conducting two-day programs in Nagpur and Amravati on the way. He stayed in Bombay for two months, where he conducted programs in so many different places that the people of Bombay decided to publish a collection of his satsangs delivered there.

When Swami Satyam returned to Nandgram, he looked at the files and said, "From now on books will have to be published continuously. We should have our own press now. You very well know the difficulties faced in getting books printed from Allahabad. The press should now be our top priority."

"If this is your will, it will surely materialize," Satyavratji replied.

### **Wanderings in Bihar**

Swami Satyam visited Bihar in January 1961. He gave a program in Chhapra, and then stayed on for a month, conducting programs in nearby places. From there he came to Munger . . .

In the initial days he stayed in a devotee's house at Lal Darwaza. Later on he started staying in Raibahadur Kedarnath Goenka's Ananda Bhavan, a beautiful and historical place. Built by the local king, Mir Qasim, many centuries ago, it is a sprawling place with beautifully designed architecture. Within the premises are gardens with trees laden with fruit, manicured lawns and all sorts of exotic plants and trees. The natural beauty of this place is worth seeing.

But there is something else which makes this place extra special. Nestled behind trees, flowerbeds and fountains is a small square plaza, with chairs and benches for leisurely relaxation. Directly below flows the mighty Ganga, as if kissing the ramparts of the building. The river is quite wide here. Sitting here one sees the blue sky above and the blue water below, no matter where one looks. One can sit here for hours together without tiring of the scene.

This scenic place, away from the hustle and bustle of the town, was quite dear to Swami Satyananda. This is where he put together the bhajan booklet *Siddha Prarthana*, which was eventually printed in Allahabad. Whenever Swami Satyananda came to Bihar, the love and affection of Goenkaji and the beauty of Ananda Bhavan always attracted him to Munger, and he would come and stay here for a few days. Now a new attraction had been added to that list – Karna Chaura. He went there anytime he felt like it, be it morning, noon or evening, and he would always have some special experiences.

Whenever he stayed in Munger, he would always come to Karna Chaura and sit on the ancient platform. Sometimes he would meditate, at other times he would go to sleep there itself. Sometimes he would have visions that would shake him up, yet he always returned to that place.

Goenkaji wanted Swamiji to settle down in Munger. He would always say, “Please stay here in this town blessed by the *uttarvahini* or northward flowing Ganga. If you so desire, we’ll build an ashram for you as well.” To which Swami Satyananda always said, “I don’t want to build an ashram. But whenever I visit Munger, I will definitely stay in Ananda Bhavan.”

In Bhagalpur, he would stay at Shiv Bhavan. Mrs Adhyavati Sahay knew Swami Satyam from his Rishikesh days and everyone in their family respected him very much. Many of the family members took mantra initiation from Swamiji, including Mrs Sushila Sahay, Dr B.L. Prasad and Mrs Hemlata Prasad were also close devotees, who helped in every way possible.

In Chhapra, Swamiji stayed with Kailaspati Narayan, a dedicated disciple who eventually published a book of his satsangs. From Munger, Swami Satyam would travel to Bhagalpur, Chhapra, Katrasgarh, Sitamarhi, Patna and other places, conducting satsang programs, and then return to Munger.

### **A conceited thakur’s change of heart**

Swami Satyananda’s disciples and devotees can be found everywhere. His character is such that whoever meets him or

attends his satsang even once is unable to forget him for the rest of his life. Even if one is an atheist or a staunch opponent of Swamiji's views, after meeting him one is transformed into an ardent devotee. Let me narrate an incident that highlights this aspect of Swamiji's personality . . .

There is a small village by the name of Raipur in Rewa district. The entire village lived in awe of the landlord, Thakur Ravinandan Singh. His younger brother, Narendra Singh, was a major in the army who was posted in Delhi during Swamiji's Rishikesh days. He would regularly go to Rishikesh and meet Swami Satyam, whom he respected very much. He did a lot of personal sadhana and often wrote letters to Swami Satyam for guidance. He had one persistent request for Swamiji, "If you ever happen to visit Rewa, please go to my ancestral village also. It is a very backward and old-fashioned area; your presence will definitely bring about a positive change in my family and the entire village."

When Swamiji visited Rewa in 1959, he decided to go to this village of Raipur as well. As soon as he entered the village, the villagers warned him, "Mahatmaji, please return the way you came. Our despotic thakur doesn't mind snatching even the meagre belongings of sadhus and sannyasins."

"I have come here to pay a visit to that very thakur's home," replied Swamiji. "Please show me the way."

The villagers pleaded with him. "Please don't go; otherwise you'll surely be insulted and humiliated. Once a sadhu approached the thakur, with his cow in tow. The thakur snatched the cow, gave the sadhu a sound thrashing when he objected, and sent him packing. He always carries a rifle with him. Even the beggars are afraid of approaching him. So Maharaj, please drop the idea of meeting this brute."

"In that case," said Swami Satyananda with a smile, "I definitely have to meet him." So saying, he made his way to his doorstep.

At their first meeting, the thakur's behaviour towards Swami Satyananda was callous to say the least. In the end, he said, "Since my younger brother has sent you, I'll ask you to

stay for a day in my house.” Thakur Ravinandan Singh had a friend, Dharmadas Mishra, who was a retired superintendent of police. Both friends had satsang with Swamiji that day. When he was preparing to leave the next day, the thakur said, “Maharaj, stay on for another day or two.”

“My guru has commanded me to have satsang with everyone, high or low, rich or poor,” said Swamiji, “so I will stay in the temple nearby and have satsang with the villagers there.”

“Well, in that case, I’ll invite the villagers here. But you have to stay in my house,” said the thakur emphatically.

A few villagers came, trembling with fear, when invited for Swamiji’s satsang. As far as Swamiji’s departure was concerned, it kept being postponed and he ended up staying at the thakur’s residence for almost a month. Slowly the villagers also started attending Swamiji’s satsangs in large numbers.

The thakur loved bhang, which was prepared for him on a daily basis. The practice of purdah was so strict that let alone a mortal, even the sun could not cast a glance at the faces of the womenfolk of the household. The gun culture was so ingrained in the region that even the ladies carried revolvers. Little boys carried guns when they went to school. The girls of course did not go to school at all.

The thakur’s family was extremely rich, but they were so money-minded that after each monsoon season they would bring out all the ‘gold, silver and cash’ and dry it in the sun for fear of it rotting! Before sunning, the entire cache would be weighed and then it would be weighed again before putting it back. If the servants quoted a figure a few ounces less, it was considered acceptable. If they quoted the actual figure, the thakur would say, “It hasn’t dried properly, put it out in the sun again tomorrow!”

The thakur was overly cautious when going on journeys. If he had to travel to a village ten miles away, great preparations would be made for his journey. Bhang would be prepared, an elephant would be readied to carry the thakur and many people would join in the retinue. When they found out that they had travelled twelve miles or so and overshot their destination, they

would pitch their tents right there, and enjoy food, drink and bhang late into the night, after which they would return home. The next day the lavish preparations would be repeated again, but this time they would proceed carefully, asking many people on the way, and reach their destination straightaway. Such were the odd habits of the thakur!

Swami Satyananda's satsangs brought about a sea-change in the thakur's household. The womenfolk began attending the satsangs, the girls began attending school, the poor villagers also began to be invited for the satsangs. The thakur would now and then extend a helping hand to a poor, needy person. The day Swami Satyananda was finally leaving, the thakur handed him five hundred rupees.

"I cannot accept this," said Swamiji. "As a sannyasin, all I want is that others understand my teachings and try to live in accordance with them, in peace, brotherhood and harmony. You have given me food and clothing, and I'm sure you will arrange a ticket for my onward journey as well. Then what need do I have for this money?"

The thakur took out his revolver and aimed it straight at Swamiji. "Maharaj," he said, "I've looted many at gunpoint. What to speak of sadhus, I haven't spared even beggars. And now with this very gun, I'll force you to accept this. For the first time in my life I'm giving instead of taking. If you don't accept it, I'll shoot you."

Swamiji was laughing, whereas two Ganga-Yamuna-like streams were flowing down the thakur's face . . .

Presently Swami Satyananda said, "Fine, I accept your contribution. Please send it to Satyavratji, he alone handles all my work, expenses and publishing of books. Whatever you send there will only help my mission."

Such was the change of heart that Swami Satyam brought about in Thakur Ravinandan Singh and his friend, Dharmadas Mishra. He who was once the terror of the village became like a family member to all. Later on Dharmadas Mishra came to the Munger ashram as well and eventually took sannyasa initiation in January 1965.

## Founding of the International Yoga Fellowship

Swami Niranjan's first birthday was celebrated on 14th February 1961. The photograph of him taken on that day came out really nicely. A copy was sent to Swami Satyananda. Two months later we received a parcel containing copies of his latest books, *Yoga Nidra* and *The Science of Pranayama*. We were delighted to see that very photograph printed in the book, under the following caption:

The descent of a great disciple, who is destined to revive Indian spiritual culture and spearhead the yogic renaissance.

In 1961, Swami Satyam conducted many programs in Bihar. In between his various programs, he would stay at Ananda Bhavan and work on many different books. One of them was a translation of *Lessons on Yoga* into Hindi under the title of *Yoga Sadhana, Part 1*. Compilation of letters for *Yoga Sadhana, Part 2* was going on at the same time. Programs were also being conducted in Bombay, Amravati, Nandgram, Bhilai, Bilaspur, Raigarh and Calcutta. The devotees of Bombay had compiled Swamiji's English satsangs into four books, which were ready for printing.

In January 1962, Swami Satyam came to Nandgram. He was getting an inner call to start an organized movement. After consulting with Satyavratji, he came to a decision. On 9th January, a meeting was called in which noted writer Dr Baldev Prasad Mishra, Revenue Minister K.L. Shukla and other persons of distinction were invited. Swami Satyam explained the motivation and vision behind the creation of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement. It was unanimously agreed to prepare all the necessary documents for this organization and begin implementing its aims and objectives forthwith.

In the next meeting convened on 15th January, Swami Satyam said, "There is a shivir coming up in Nagpur, after which I have to go to Bombay. Many books are ready for publication there. *Satyam Speaks, Words of Satyam, The Practice of Trataka, Yoga Chudamani Upanishad, Yogashakti Speaks, Steps to*

*Yoga, Yoga Initiation Papers* and *Parwanmuktasana* are the eight books in English, while in Bhagalpur, Chhapra and Munger, five books, namely *Yoga Sadhana (Parts 1 and 2)*, *Amarsangeet*, *Surya Namaskara* and *Yogasana Mudra Bandha* will be printed in Hindi. All the books will be dispatched to Nandgram after printing, where they will be handled by the Satyananda Publication Society, Nandgram.” It was decided that Satyavratji would be the secretary of the Satyananda Publication Society and that he would have it registered as soon as possible.

The next meeting concerning the International Yoga Fellowship Movement was held on 25th February where the committee members were duly elected. Swami Satyam explained how the necessary paperwork was to be completed and how the various activities of the movement had to be conducted. After explaining everything in detail, he said, “Satyavratji will also have to start making preparations for the upcoming printing press. So many books are being printed right now, who knows how many will be printed in the future. The foundation of our mission rests on these very books. I’m also getting inspirations and ideas regarding a yoga magazine. Satyavrat and Dharmashakti will have to shoulder all these responsibilities.”

“Life is like a rose,” he added. “To get the rose, one has to fight one’s way through the thorns. Life is like the jewel on the head of the cobra. To get the jewel, one has to grapple with the snake. Life is like sandalwood. To get the fragrant wood, one has to carefully cut the branches without arousing the poisonous snakes that lie coiled around them. This is the razor’s edge path that these two have to follow as well. In this age, the transcendental experience can be realized much more easily by a householder than a sannyasin.”

After outlining all the future activities and telling us about the different firms to contact regarding the press machinery, Swami Satyam left for Bihar. From 24th to 30th March, he was in Sitamarhi after which he returned to Nandgram. The registration formalities of the International Yoga Fellowship had been completed by then. He looked at the relevant



documents, gave instructions regarding the next phase of the mission and after creating an atmosphere of inspiration and joy, he left for Nagpur. From Nagpur, he proceeded to Bombay, where he stayed till the end of April. In the beginning of May, he returned to Nandgram.

He wrote a letter to Swami Sivananda informing him about the establishment of the International Yoga Fellowship and seeking his blessings for the success of the mission. We soon received a benedictory letter from Swami Sivananda:

*Divine Spirit*

*Greetings!*

*I send my heartiest congratulations to you all for starting the International Yoga Fellowship Movement. May God Almighty grant total success to this noble mission of yours. I am sending the prasada of Lord Vishwanath for the same.*

*Spiritual peace is the hallmark of the Indian civilization. It is a divine quality, pertaining to the realm of the spirit. This peace blossoms in a pure heart. Whether you call it peace or liberation, spirit or God, it is one and the same thing. This peace is attainable through meditation, devotion, japa and prayer.*

*It is impossible to find peace through the acquisition of wealth or other worldly objects. One who abandons passions and desires attains everlasting peace.*

*Remove the hatred, greed, delusion, selfishness and jealousy deeply ingrained in human society and spread the message of inner peace. Only inner peace can lead to world peace. That alone is true service of humanity. May God aid and assist you in the great task that lies ahead of you.*

*With faith, love and Om  
Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

*Divine Life Society,  
Sivananda Nagar (Rishikesh)*

Receiving the blessings of the great guru, the activities of the mission began in right earnest. Everyone was greatly inspired and enthused by the ideals of the movement.

### **Chaturmas in Ananda Bhavan, Munger**

Swami Satyam came to Munger for chaturmas. Whenever he came to Munger, he would stay at Ananda Bhavan. Besides the huge edifice of the main building in Ananda Bhavan, there is a smaller building, Gol Kothi, equipped with all facilities. He decided to stay in that building during chaturmas. The silent, secluded environment of the place suited him quite well. In the night even the watchmen did not dare to stay in that old complex steeped in history. By 11 pm the watchmen would lock all the buildings, give the keys to Swami Satyam and leave the premises. They would return only by 5 am the next morning.

Swami Satyam was practising difficult sadhanas at the time. He would take only fruits once a day. He began an intricate course of hatha yoga sadhana. The nights would be totally calm and silent, with tall, leafy trees all around and the ship-like Ananda Bhavan right in their middle and the smaller Gol Kothi by its side. The entire nature was silent, save for the sounds of the waves of the Ganga gently lapping on the shore nearby. In this conducive environment, Swami Satyam immersed himself fully in his sadhana, sometimes continuing his japa sadhana all night long.

One night, Swami Satyam heard the sound of someone dancing to the accompaniment of haunting music. He thought that the servants usually left for the night but maybe they had brought a dancing girl tonight. He went over to their rooms to ascertain the truth, but he found the rooms locked. And yet he could hear the strains of the melodious raga *Basant Bahaar*. "This bungalow once belonged to Mir Qasim," he said to himself. "Perhaps some king or noble murdered a dancing girl and her spirit is still wandering around here." He listened to the music attentively. It sounded real and alive. The melody, harmony and rhythm were quite pleasing to the ears and he kept on listening . . .

He heard this music many times over the course of his stay at Ananda Bhavan. But it never bothered him and his sadhana came to a successful conclusion. Thereafter Swami Satyam moved into the bigger building. About eight or ten gardeners and watchmen would be there during the day. People came to stroll around in the beautiful gardens. Goenkaji and his family would also drop by many times, but no one stayed there for the night. Let alone staying, no one even ventured near that place at night. In those days, Munger was sparsely populated. There was a post-mortem centre nearby as well, which was another reason why people were afraid of the place. They called this place ‘the haunted house’ and totally avoided it at night.

But Swami Satyam liked this place very much. The rear part of the building, which is close to the Ganga and where people were afraid to go even during the day, was Swami Satyam’s favourite place. He used to sit there often, enjoying the serene peace of Mother Nature, far removed from the cares and worries of a world in a tearing hurry.

Strange events began to take place in the main building as well. Many times Swami Satyam would hear the sound of someone counting coins in an adjoining room. He knew there was no one there, because the door had been bolted and locked and the key was with him. There were other inexplicable incidents as well. While he was engaged in sadhana and anushthana at night, lots of birds seemed to be flying all around the room. Swami Satyam never paid much attention to these occurrences though. He had stayed in Ananda Bhavan many times and these incidents occurred only when he undertook rigorous sadhana. Whether they were ghosts or the siddhis of sadhana, Swami Satyam didn’t care and, ignoring them totally, he carried on with his sadhana.

“A certain part of my personality has always been intellectual,” says Swami Satyam. “The spirit of enquiry and analysis was strong even from my childhood. In my guru’s ashram, although I spent most of my time in karma yoga, I still found time to study the classical systems of philosophy

and sadhana. The Samkhya philosophy is my favourite. I must have read all there is to read about the different religions and philosophies of the world.

“Whenever I met my guru bhai Swami Chidananda, whom I hold in the greatest esteem, the first thing that he would say was, ‘I won’t argue with you, Satyam. Whatever you say is right.’ Swami Venkatesananda used to say the same thing. Even today my guru bhais consider me an argumentative intellectual. And because of this trait in my nature, fear or fright has no effect upon me. I have my own way of thinking through things.”

Such is the nature of great personalities . . .

Meanwhile, the B.N.C. mill in Nandgram had been closed for many months now. There was no hope of restarting operations in the near future. The owner lived in Calcutta, and the mill was managed by his son and son-in-law. Other important administrative positions had also been filled by relatives and friends. When the owners were unable to run the mill properly, they shut it down. The officers still attended the office but the five thousand odd workers had been laid off. A struggle was going on between the labour union and the management. Local politicians were adding fuel to the fire by inciting the workers.

### **Sadhana shivir in Rajgir**

In October 1962, a fifteen-day sadhana shivir was organized in Rajgir by the devotees of Bhagalpur, and was attended by sadhakas from Chhapra, Bombay and Bhagalpur. Satyavrat and Dharmashakti came from Nandgram to attend the sadhana program. They brought Niranjan as well, who was one and a half years old at the time. Rajgir is a place worth seeing on account of its natural beauty and ancient history. This place was well frequented by Lord Buddha. He lived on the nearby Gridhakoot mountain for some time. There are many caves and viharas dating from the Buddhist era. The enchanting waterfalls, hills and hot springs take one’s breath away. In the Mahabharata era, this was the capital

of King Jarasandha, and Lord Krishna had come here with Arjuna and Bhima.

The daily routine of the shivir involved sadhana, satsang, discourses, rejuvenating baths in the hot springs and long walks in the beautiful surroundings. Swami Satyam would relate interesting facts and anecdotes. In the evenings, we would sit by his side to hear inspiring satsangs:

Fortunate indeed are they whose hearts are filled with tender emotions for the guru, for in this path emotions are like electric currents. If the sadhakas who have an abundance of this emotional energy don't put it to good use, they end up missing the chance of a lifetime. First of all, love is extremely difficult to find in this world and even if one does find it, it is usually tainted by lust, passion and other base emotions, which is why worldly love either ends up as hate or obsession. The same thing happens with love for the guru. Mostly it is absent, and if present it is in the form of lukewarm feelings of respect and adoration, not a strong bond of love and affection. And even if there is a strong feeling of love, gradually that feeling tends to get perverted and distorted.

But where the guru and disciple are united on all planes, where there is no perversion or distortion in their relationship, there all the divine energies and powers awaken. Love should be deep and extraordinary, yet remain pure and sublime. Just as electricity drives both the broadcasting and the receiving instrument, so does the feeling of true love animate both guru and disciple. If you have such closeness with the guru, then boldly march on the path of dhyana, bravely crossing each milestone. Listen to every message that I send. Use the inner language of the mind to send and receive messages in the mental realm. Understand these concepts and then apply them. Meditate, meditate . . . lose yourself in the stream of continuous remembrance. What happened, why it happened, what will happen – these are worthless questions. Never waste

your time thinking about them. Everything is but God's gift unto you. He is the one and only Giver. Don't think why He gave to one and not to the other. Entertaining such thoughts is sheer madness.

Rise above the petty reactions of daily life. This is a higher level of sadhana. Practise non-attachment. Disharmony and discord are mental imaginations. Suffering is nothing but a mental creation. Be blissful and happy. This is real sannyasa. To get involved in any and everything is a sign of worldliness. Swinging on the pendulum of happiness and sorrow creates disturbances in one's sadhana. Let life go on in its own sweet way. Be joyful always. You don't have to do anything, God will do the needful. You just act like a machine.

I concern myself solely with the works and activities of my mission. I have no need for casual friends. Shirkers and slackers will be automatically sifted out. My work will be carried forward by Satyavrat and Dharmashakti. I see completeness in the two of you. Others are also capable and useful, but I can't call them my own. Even if I turn roguish, you two will never desert me, whereas all the others will turn their faces and leave.

Your progress is satisfactory. Persevere with your sadhana. The clouds of ignorance will definitely blow away and the light of knowledge will shine forth. Keep that one name, that one form always in mind. Never forget it for a second. Let the mental waves quieten, let the storms pass away. No sooner do the mental waves subside in the sub-stratum of the soul than . . .

A woman progresses slowly but steadily and resolutely. Women have hardly walked on this path before, but then who has bothered to show them the way? Some tried but they themselves lost their way. It is a great and rare coincidence that both of you are following me on exactly parallel paths. This is an unheard of samskara. Dharmashakti, you have received a 'jewel' as a boon for your tapasya and good samskaras. Immerse yourself in a life

of tyaga, tapasya and sadhana, in order to ensure a bright future for this 'jewel'. Slowly, one by one, start withdrawing the thought waves using the tools of 'name' and 'form'. Sometimes you'll see clouds, sometimes lightning, sometimes stars, sometimes moonlight, sometimes a walk in the sky . . . Do you understand?

And sometimes you will hear the sounds of the veena, sitar and drums, sometimes the humming of bees and sometimes the *anahad* or transcendental sound. When sadhana becomes full of joy and bliss, almost everyone tends to get lost in that bliss. That can also be an obstacle. Never let the experiences of pain, pleasure or bliss raise their heads in front of the constant memory of your *mantra*, name, and *ishta*, form. The more attention you pay to your mind and its vagaries, the greater will be the anxiety, worry, confusion, disharmony and forgetfulness of your *ishta*. True love is an experience beyond description, whereas the leaps of the deer-like mind are confined to the cage created by maya. You should only concern yourself with your sadhana. Progress is happening and will happen.

The mind of a woman is mercurial indeed. Her nature is like nectar, but blinded by selfishness she can also turn into poison. If her mind attains one-pointedness and fixity of purpose, what wonders it can create! People ask as to whether men and women retain their different characteristics on the spiritual plane as well? In the physical realm, this is of course true, but not in the spiritual realm. There they are one element, one energy, one flow, and both have to undergo the fire of sadhana and mould their minds around the mantra and *ishta*, name and form. Whatever differences we see are on account of the upbringing, education and other influences of society. As soon as the sadhana matures, the old leaves fall off and spring sets in. All doubts vanish and are replaced by self-confidence and faith.

Actually, society has superimposed its own drawbacks and failings upon the feminine mind; she has been forced to

mould herself according to the dictates of society. Women over the ages have been made to undergo debasing trials and tribulations, but that doesn't mean they are debased. In the final analysis, everyone's true nature is that of the spirit, *sat-chit-ananda*. The samskaras that manifest outside are merely a covering veil.

The locals left after the satsang but the participants of the sadhana shivir remained with Swamiji. Addressing us, Swami Satyam said:

When the spiritual current intensifies, the memory of name and form begins to flow ceaselessly. When it continues in the dreaming state, know that they have touched your innermost consciousness. When you experience progress in meditation, know that memory of name and form has intensified. When it begins to appear like reality, know that the memory has become sentient. The river of inspiration is flowing within; allow it to have a wider course than before. You will have to completely overhaul your sankalpas and give them concrete shape. Shake off the old leaves of past years. Let new leaves, new flowers, new branches herald the onset of a new spring.

Do not let weakness creep into your sankalpas. Strengthen your faith. The doubt-filled night is passing. May the sun of faith shine forth so that you may guide others as well on this path. Your thoughts should be in one direction only. Behind each and every thought should be the underlying desire to achieve perfection in perception of the form.

Perfect your sadhana in solitude. Employ japa, mala, pictures, purascharana, mouna, solitude, asana, pranayama, self-study, mantra writing and meditation. God-contemplation even in your sleep, japa and dhyana even in your dreams! For the next fifteen days, forget everything and immerse yourself in the highest bliss.



We have to work with our goal always in mind. Through japa and dhyana, faith and belief, we have to awaken and manifest a potent energy. We must manifest our ishta as a conscious, living entity. We must learn to close the doors of the senses, even a minute or half a minute is enough. Then only can we expect the inner doors to open. This is the state of meditation, for which silence of the mind is essential. This is possible only through continuous remembrance and japa of the name.

You must thoroughly eradicate fear of every kind. No need to be afraid of either truth or falsehood, vice or virtue, do's or don'ts, god or demon. Fear arises from things hidden in the heart, from acts intended to be hidden from others. Hearing ill of others, or favouring one at the cost of the other also generates a feeling of fear. But real fear arises from loss of faith in God. All the other fears are merely different manifestations of this primal fear. Inauspiciousness and ignorance remain as long as there is fear. You must put aside your fears and meditate deeply. Japa with each incoming and outgoing breath, gradual cessation of all thoughts, victory over anxiety and nervousness, meditation and more meditation; only then can you go in. Once you are in, you will find the way further. Shut all the doors. The winds of worldliness will open them again. Again you must close them firmly. If japa of the name stops then everything will come to a grinding halt.

*The mind goes grazing  
Anxiety is like a thorn in the side  
Flowers attract the mind.*

*The crow caws shrilly  
The nightingale mesmerizes  
The parrot triggers memories.*

*The summer is hot  
Winter chills to the bone  
Fix the mind on one thought.*

*Let the dog bark  
Keep yourself aloof and unaffected  
Be free from wishful thinking.*

Who doesn't have cares and worries? The river flows, that is its nature. Life moves on, that is its nature. If we have to be anxious, it should only be over one thing – how to have a glimpse of 'the Divine Form'. That should be our constant thought, our constant worry. Don't think that by receiving a mantra you have become liberated. We have always been free, when did we commit sins anyway? What is right and wrong after all? A murderer receives punishment in this world itself. We have not taken mantra diksha for liberation, rather it is for God-realization that we have received the mantra. We love Him, which is why we have started sadhana. Remove all this baggage of right-wrong, bondage-liberation and any other useless notions.

Worldly love leads to downfall. Sorrow at separation, happiness at reunion – these are symptoms of worldly love. True love is mature and serious. It is of the nature of eternal peace and endless joy. My God has not gone anywhere, He is not coming from anywhere, He is in each and every cell of my being – this should be our attitude. Only then can guru and disciple avoid the pitfalls of bondage and downfall. Only then can the disciple gain a glimpse of the higher knowledge. Awaken and arouse your spirit and, tearing through the barriers of space and time, unite with your guru in meditation. Mere mechanical repetition of the guru's name won't suffice. This yoga should proceed day and night. The world is a cage, confined by the walls of success and failure, hope and dejection, whereas spiritual life is a wide, open field of joyous sport. Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose, sometimes we get hurt, yet we get up laughing. Hari Om.

The satsangs would continue in this vein every day. Many people would attend the satsangs, ask questions, discuss their problems. Even the mundane utterances of Swami Satyam had the quality of a satsang. When asked something, he would reply in a lucid and clear manner. One day, expounding upon the attitude of a bhakta who has surrendered completely, he said, “A true bhakta accepts both joy and suffering, pleasure and pain as an auspicious gift from God.”

*What you consider a curse  
and the cause of raging fires everywhere  
is God's blessing in disguise;  
remember this golden truth forever.*

Then he narrated a short story to illustrate his point. While Sri Rama and Lakshman were searching for Sita, they came to the banks of the Pampa lake. Sticking their arrows into the soft sand, they entered the water for a bath. After their bath when they extracted their arrows, one of them had blood on its tip. They realized that the arrow must have pierced a frog by accident. They were greatly distressed and said to the frog, “You should have cried aloud when the arrow pierced you.”

The frog replied in a sad tone, “Whenever faced with difficulties or dangers, I would cry out *Rama Rama* to save myself. But today when the saviour himself became the killer, whom should I have called for help? And why? This injury is also a form of my Lord's grace.” How sublime are the sentiments of such a bhakta!

We continued to swim in the ceaselessly flowing currents of Swamiji's satsangs for a week or so. And then with renewed vigour and enthusiasm we got ready to return to our respective fields of work. We all went for a visit to nearby Nalanda as well. A meeting of the International Yoga Fellowship committee was also held, where future programs were chalked out under Swami Satyam's detailed instructions.

## **Commencement of Yoga Vidya printing press**

Swami Satyam gave instructions for the installation of press machines in Nandgram. "It might take up to four or five months," he said, "for the machines to arrive, be installed and for printing to begin. I've decided to begin publication of yoga magazines in English and Hindi from January 1963. You have a lot of work to do. The books have already started reaching you in Nandgram. Their printing will continue and they will be stocked with you. Future books will be printed in our own press." He explained everything about the machines. We showed him the catalogues and brochures that we had obtained for different press machines.

Swami Satyam reached Munger via Bhagalpur and Chhapra. His work was growing by leaps and bounds. He was getting a lot of support from all quarters for the dissemination of yoga. Premniti Babu had a 500 ft film made on Swamiji's pawanmuktasana series and also gave film binders. Devaniti Babu contributed a duplicate of a 12,000 ft colour film on yoga asanas. A sixteen millimetre projector, three tape recorders, tapes, transformers and wrist watches were contributed by Goenkaji and other devotees.

Swami Satyam is receiving and will keep on receiving many things from his devotees, but the things he received in the early days of his mission have a special place in his heart. Even now he gets sentimental when talking about them. He says, "These things proved priceless at the time, for through them alone my yoga publicity work started and took off. The people who gave them are the people who really contributed to the start of my yoga mission." And very quickly his yoga mission began to spread in Bihar.

Swami Satyam used to play bhajans and satsangs on his tape recorder wherever he went. He would frequently meet great saints and sages, and he would record their benedictory speeches and discourses. Besides he would show films on pawanmuktasana and other yoga asanas. Many new books were being printed. Fifteen books ranging from sixty to three hundred pages had already been printed and dispatched to

Nandgram. Swamiji would distribute these books freely to one and all.

In January 1963 we received a letter from Swami Satyam wherein he wrote, "I've sent the January issues of two magazines, *Yoga Vidya* in Hindi and *Yoga* in English, for printing. For the next two or three months they will be printed in outside presses, but once your press becomes operational, all the printing work will shift to Nandgram. Your press will be called Yoga Vidya Press. Have the registration done under this name." The magazines came out on time, and all disciples, devotees and acquaintances received copies. Everyone heartily appreciated this new endeavour and pledged all possible help and support.

Satyavratji acquired a house in the heart of the town and put up boards titled 'Satyananda Publication Society' and 'Yoga Vidya Printing Press' outside the house. Then he began arranging equipment for the press. It was not an easy task for him. On the one hand, the closure of the mill had increased his workload in the office, and on the other, he had no previous knowledge or experience of press machinery. Satyavratji placed the responsibility of setting up the press on the shoulders of Jai Narayan, one of Dharmashakti's brothers who had run the Suruchi Press in Nagpur for four years. Jai Narayan went to Amritsar and Allahabad to look at the different models available. Then as per the instructions of Swami Satyam, he procured two printing machines, one big and the other small, together with all the other accessories. A cutting machine was procured from Calcutta and the type came from Allahabad and Pune. Once all the equipment had arrived in Nandgram, mechanics came from Nagpur to install the machines.

In the early days, running the press proved to be a big hassle. For every little item or spare part, one had to run to Nagpur or Raipur. The repair work of different parts of the presses could only be carried out in Calcutta, as there were no good mechanics in Nandgram. Before 1963, there were only two presses in Nandgram. Yoga Vidya Press was the third to

start operations and by 1983 (when Yoga Vidya Press finally wound up) there were thirty-two presses in operation. Every kind of facility is now available, be it mechanics or spare parts or other accessories.

Swami Satyam stayed in Chhapra during January and February of 1963. In March he came to Nandgram and on the 15th he left for Nagpur. After conducting a program there he proceeded to Bombay. In April he returned to Nandgram, inspected the press machinery and after giving detailed instructions regarding the functioning of the press, the printing of the magazines and the mailing to subscriber addresses, he proceeded to Chhapra. From there he dispatched all the relevant material for the magazines to us in Nandgram and then went to Munger, where he intended to stay for a while.

With Swami Satyam's grace, everything soon fell into place. The machines started working satisfactorily, and all the files, registers, forms, receipt books, matter for magazines (including the final ready matter for the May issue) and the addresses of subscribers arrived from Chhapra. And with the blessings of the great saint, Yoga Vidya Printing Press started its inaugural operation with the May issues of *Yoga Vidya* and *Yoga*.

"I'm very happy that we have our own press now," said Swami Satyam on the occasion. "Books are the foundation of our mission. I would like to establish modern presses in all four corners of the country, from where our books can be published and distributed in many different languages. Now that the Yoga Vidya Printing Press has started in Nandgram, and it is also the headquarters of our International Yoga Fellowship Movement, besides being the distribution centre for all our books, in future all the activities of our mission will be conducted from Nandgram itself."

The people of Raigarh had been insisting on building an ashram where Swami Satyam could reside permanently. But Swami Satyam would always say, "I'll never make an ashram. I will be a wandering sadhu till 1968. After completing twelve

years of mendicancy, I will go to the Himalayas.” Still those people built a place which they started calling an ashram. To be honest, even Satyavratji had an ashram in mind, for which he had bought a piece of land as well. But as per Swami Satyam’s directives he remained busy with the press and the publishing of books and magazines. He even forgot that he had ever planned to build an ashram or a house on that plot of land.

At the special request of Goenkaji, Swami Satyam decided to spend chaturmas at Ananda Bhavan. At the request of the local people, Swami Satyam began conducting an asana class from 5 to 6 am and satsang from 5.30 to 7 pm. From 4th July, the holy day of Guru Poornima, Swami Satyam began his hatha yoga sadhana. The thought of an ashram was nowhere on his mental screen. But destiny is inevitable. Sometimes it manifests itself in the most unimaginable of ways . . .

### **Mahasamadhi of Swami Sivananda**

At 3 am in the morning of 14th July 1963, Swami Satyam had a transcendental experience, which is reproduced below in his own words:

On July 14th 1963 I had been sleeping in my bed in Munger when suddenly I woke up internally. I can’t say what that realm of consciousness was (here I am not using the word dream or vision). I had been fast asleep and while sleeping, suddenly my consciousness went beyond the experiences of body and mind. I was standing on the right bank of the Ganga in Rishikesh, and a steam launch was crossing to the other side. My guru, Swami Sivananda, was seated on a chair in the rear of the launch, looking towards Swargashram. Trumpets and conches were being blown and bells were ringing.

Then, for a moment, Swami Sivananda turned around and looked at me, while at the same time the propeller of the launch splashed water on my body. That was the end of the inner awakening, but, when I got up from

my bed, the experience had been so real that I still did not know whether I was in Rishikesh or Munger. When I looked around, I thought, ‘What is this? Am I dreaming?’ I thought that Rishikesh had been the real experience and now I was dreaming of Munger. The state of confusion became unbearable. Slowly I regained control over myself and realized that I was in Munger, not Rishikesh.

This inner experience was extremely vivid, it was not a dream. It felt as if I had left *prithvi loka*, this earthly plane, and travelled to chandra loka to meet Swami Sivananda. The entire experience had been very clear, and I had been fully conscious throughout. It was a transcendental, eternal experience indeed.

Soon thereafter, Swami Satyananda said to Goenkaji, “I am going to Rishikesh. Guruji is no more.” He went to the station and caught a train for Rishikesh. When he arrived there, akhanda kirtan was going on. It seemed as if all the disciples and devotees, the entire ‘family’ of Swami Sivananda had gathered there to pay their last respects.

On 16th July, Swami Sivananda was given bhu samadhi in the sanctum sanctorum of the Samadhi Mandir, which had already been built. Swami Sivananda knew how long his mortal body would remain on this earth. He had said on the eve of Sivaratri itself, “Whoever wants to take sannyasa should do so now. Who knows if I’ll be around on next Sivaratri.” In June he had said, “This is my last discourse and satsang.” From the next day itself, he had taken ill. He would laughingly ask the disciples gathered around him, “Who is coming with me?” When someone would say yes, he would shake his head and say, “Someone else will come with me.” According to the doctors, his condition was serious, but when asked a question, he would reply with total attentiveness, as if he had total control over his conscious faculties. For two days, he hadn’t taken anything, not even a drop of water. On the evening of the 13th, he asked for Ganga water and drank more than half a glass. He was very happy thereafter. Seeing that



special look of serene joy and bliss on his face, the disciples must have felt a certain premonition. They asked him for a final instruction. With a smile, he wrote down, “Forget and remember – Sivananda.” With his parting words, Swami Sivananda reminded his disciples to forget the world and remember God.

The mortal body of Swami Sivananda may have gone, but his legacy remains with us. After all, what has really gone? Everything is still here. Swami Sivananda disappeared from this place and age only to become ageless. He had descended on this planet for the establishment and propagation of yoga. And for transforming that yoga into a worldwide culture, his favourite disciple, Swami Satyananda, had already founded the International Yoga Fellowship Movement with his blessings.

### **End of mendicancy**

Receiving the blessings of his omnipresent and omniscient guru, Swami Satyananda returned to Munger. Ceaseless contemplation upon the mandate his guru had given him continued for the next few days. And then flashed the next command: “Your life as a mendicant is over. Now you have to establish an ashram to spread yoga amongst different sections of society. You have much to accomplish.”

And Swami Satyananda made his decision. “From now on I will stay here in Munger,” he told Goenkaji. “Please construct a small ashram for me.” Goenkaji was only too happy to oblige. This is what he had wanted all along. Even Ananda Bhavan had taken on the look and feel of an ashram at that time, with Swamiji’s disciples and devotees coming and staying there for days at a stretch. Goenkaji would gladly look after all their needs on such occasions.

Swami Satyananda outlined his plans for the ashram – a big hall, a private room for himself, a kitchen, a store, three rooms for visitors, a havan kund, a courtyard and a lawn. Blueprints were drawn up and construction started adjacent to the Goenka dharmashala.

Swamiji came to Nandgram in October. He said, "I've received requests for programs, shivirs and satsangs from many places. I will go to all these places in the coming days, but in December of this year, my period of mendicancy will come to an end. From January 1964 I will stay in Munger. On Basant Panchami I will light an akhanda jyoti in the name of my beloved Gurudev and adopt the discipline of living in one place." He gave instructions on how to print the letterheads, pads, receipt books, etc., for the new institution coming up in Munger.

Ah! The vagaries of ever-fickle Time! There was a period when we could have darshan of a great saint without leaving the confines of our homes. A peerless exponent of yoga would come and impart the rare and priceless teachings of yoga at our very doorsteps. Now we won't be having this rare privilege anymore.

Swami Satyananda is now going to organize and accomplish an even greater task. In January of 1964, his parivrajaka role will be over and he will be adopting the position and role of a paramahansa. He will not be travelling anywhere, but staying in Munger itself. Remaining absorbed in a state of inner communion with the divine, his main task will be to orchestrate the spiritual unfolding of all beings. A saint's powers are much more effective when he is in a state of introversion. Silence is much more powerful than words. His spiritual light will spread from Munger, inspiring and directing others on the path of sadhana and inner progress. All devotees, disciples and aspirants will now meet Swami Satyananda at his ashram, the Bihar School of Yoga, in Munger.

Programs were organized everywhere. Swami Satyananda visited Bombay, Pune, Amravati, Khamgaon, Neemgaon and eventually Ajanta-Ellora. There he received special instructions and blessings from Gurudev and other divine beings. He also received instructions regarding the sadhana and status befitting a paramahansa. He undertook a vow there and cast off his kurta, watch and shoes. Then visiting Nagpur,

Gondia and Dongargarh, he finally came to Nandgram, where he stayed for five days. From early morning till late night, our house would remain crowded with people wanting to meet him. Seeing Swami Satyananda clad only in a dhoti in the middle of winter made the old ladies wince in pain. People from the entire town and many nearby villages as well kept streaming in for his darshan. They came from all the places he had ever visited, and also from places he had never been to. Expressing their desire for mantra diksha, they would say, “Guru maharaj, we are poor people, we do not have much to offer you,” and so saying they would burst into tears.

In the words of Dr Baldev Prasad Mishra:

Many years ago, Swami Satyananda Saraswati had arrived in Nandgram as a young, solitary ascetic. His inborn spiritual samskaras had an opportunity to flower when he received the blessings of the founder of the famous Divine Life Society, His Holiness Swami Sivananda, whom he accepted as his guru. Once he set out as a parivrajaka, it was the good fortune of Nandgram that it became the first milestone on his glorious journey. Not only did he put the lonely, secluded places of this area to good use for his personal sadhana, but he also adopted different ways and means to help and uplift the local populace. Even though lone and solitary, he dared to dream of a worldwide organization for the dissemination of yoga. And he didn't remain just a dreamer, he manifested his dream.

Whether someone chooses to become a disciple of Swami Satyananda or not, he can still derive great benefit from his elevating company. Howsoever convoluted and complicated the questions may be, he never gets annoyed. Rather he is always willing to dispel all one's doubts and uncertainties in the most clear and comprehensible way. He knows many techniques for keeping both body and mind healthy. Whatever drops one may get from the ocean of his wisdom are priceless in themselves.

Once Swami Satyananda had said:

Have one and one only ishta. Whether it be a form of God or just a plain black dot, it should always remain within your conscious perception during japa, and your connection with it should always remain fresh and alive. When your attention begins to waver from the ishta, you should end your japa.” On another occasion, he said, “Asana, pranayama, japa and dhyana are done to instil new energy, new vitality into our hearts. If a certain practice or system leads to greater fatigue instead of freshness and bliss, know that system to be faulty. And if you are unable to rectify the fault, you should abandon it totally.

On a different occasion, he had said:

Only that person is fit to be a guru whose presence instils peace and serenity, and who is able to solve one’s problems. An aspirant progresses through his own faith and conviction, not by concerning himself with the virtues and vices of the guru. Diksha from a living guru has its own significance. His form, teaching and mantra destroy the evil samskaras embedded in the subconscious and unconscious layers of the mind. Therefore, one should definitely find a guru for oneself. But he should choose only that person who can awaken his inner faith. Whether the disciple is initiated individually or collectively, it is his faith and dedication that are essential ingredients for his progress.

Elucidating further on this subject on another occasion, he said:

Becoming a gurmukhi disciple of the guru does not mean that one has become a slave of the guru or that one can never leave him. If the disciple so desires, with his guru’s permission he can go to another guide. And if he

so wants he can return the mala to his guru and break off all his ties to him forever.

His utterance was totally practical and realistic. Once he had even said, “If a householder can be a sanniyasin, why can’t a sanniyasin be a householder?”

Five days of Swamiji’s company flew by in the twinkling of an eye and soon it was time for him to leave. Blessing everyone, inviting everyone to the new Munger ashram, receiving the love, adoration and respect of thousands of well-wishers, he departed for Durg. Satyavratji accompanied him. I could not go as there were many guests in the house. Moreover, it was the request of the many devotees who had come from the nearby villages that I, their ‘didi’, tell them more about Guruji and his mission, and it was Swami Satyananda’s instruction that I read out passages from *Yoga Sadhana, Part 1* and explain them to the villagers.

I had been to many of these villages with Swami Satyananda and I had taught these women asana and pranayama, besides teaching them some simple home remedies. All the village women used to call me ‘didi’. They would often come by when faced with some problem or to seek my advice on an important matter. Even otherwise, whenever they came to the bazaar, they would drop by for ten to fifteen minutes. The great guru’s blessings were showering on everyone, just like a mother doling out delicacies to all her children. It was his instruction to share with everyone what I had gained for myself.

Programs were conducted in Durg, Bhilai, Raipur, Bilaspur and Raigarh. Satyavratji returned from Raigarh, while Swami Satyananda went on to Calcutta, then to Chhapra, Bhagalpur and eventually Munger. The construction work for the ashram was nearing completion. Goenkaji was busy preparing for the ashram’s inauguration and the reception of guests. He was happy beyond words.

In the December issue of *Yoga*, Swami Satyananda’s benedictory message was published:

*Blessed Self,*

*Om Namah Shivaya*

*On the eve of my entering into the holy order of Paramahansa on the auspicious day of Basant Panchami, the 19th January 1964, I thank all my disciples, devotees and admirers for their kind help and cooperation accorded to me during my parivrajaka life, enabling me in propagating spiritual and yogic knowledge from door to door and place to place all over India.*

*Henceforth I shall not be able to move about, but will be ever prepared to help all those who seek my advice and guidance through correspondence or personal instructions at the Bihar School of Yoga, which is going to be started in Munger through the kind patronage of Sri Kedar Nath Goenka. This school will impart fifteen-day training in all branches of yoga under my personal guidance as its chief acharya. All of you are requested to join this school, which is the only school of its kind in the country and abroad imparting practical yogic knowledge.*

*On this very date, in memory of my Guru, His Holiness Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who attained mahasamadhi on 14th July 1963, an akhanda deepak will be kept burning for all times to come, as a token of my deep regards and gratitude for Guruji, from whom I was able to learn all the practical aspects of yoga. I am sure you will all continue your kind help and support as before for the widespread dissemination of this ancient science of yoga all over the world in a modern and scientific way.*

*Lastly I pray to God Almighty to shower upon you His blessings, for peace, prosperity and kaivalya. May you all lead a yogic life and attain God-realization.*

*In prayers,  
Swami Satyananda*

In April 1956, Paramguru Swami Sivananda had given Swami Satyananda his blessings and said, “Satyam, go and conquer the world!” And now the obedient disciple, spreading the message of yoga everywhere and donning the mantle of a paramahansa sannyasin, was about to light the eternal flame dedicated to his guru.

The sentiments that Sri Keshav Dutt Pandey expressed in 1954 seem particularly relevant now:

Has anyone ever achieved total victory and domination over the denizens of this world? No. But from time to time some great men have appeared on this planet, who have achieved total and eternal conquest over all the beings of the planet. Not only did they win over the people of their time, but like Buddha or Shankaracharya they have left an indelible imprint in the hearts of succeeding generations of human beings as well.

Did they wage war against kingdoms and nations? Did they triumph using weapons and armies? No, definitely not. Sacrificing their own pleasure and happiness, they began toiling for the welfare of the world and encouraged others to do the same as well. Their teachings were not mere words, rather they were outer expressions of the inner experiences they themselves had on the path. When these experiences took on the form of teachings, they were charged with the personal conviction and soul force of these great men. These are the weapons through which these great men will rule over the hearts of people for all times to come.

Looking at this young ascetic, one cannot help thinking that the Creator has sent him here to fulfil a grand mission. At the very dawn of his life, this ascetic found a guru of the highest calibre and surrendered his life completely at his feet. From his guru he learnt the art of true living. Following the cardinal principles of brahmacharya, satya, ahimsa, seva, karuna and prem, he acquired self-realization in the end.

Since childhood he exhibited scholarship in Sanskrit, Hindi and English, and after coming to his guru's ashram, he became fluent in many more languages. Saraswati gave him pure and powerful speech, the moon, calm serenity and the sun, the light of knowledge.

Becoming irresistibly attracted to him upon seeing his radiant, smiling face has become quite a common occurrence in these parts. His words are so sweet that the ears' thirst is never quenched. One feels like listening to him again and again.

He has brought forth many books in Hindi and English for the benefit of the public. Not only is he a prolific writer but an excellent poet and orator as well. Even while engaged in the service of society and humanity, he never loses sight of his goal. He has acquired a thorough experiential knowledge of each and every stage of spiritual life, which is why he is universally acknowledged as an unfailing and inspiring guide on the spiritual path, whose heart is brimming over with the desire to unite each and every soul with the eternal cosmic spirit. A true karma yogi, his life can be summed up in the following words:

*The young Dharmendra of yesterday,  
Swami Satyananda Saraswati of today,  
And an illustrious paramahansa sannyasin of tomorrow.*

May God aid him in the fulfilment of his sankalpa and keep his name alive in people's hearts for ages to come!



# The Beginnings of an Ashram and an Organization



Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati did not merely acquire siddhis and spend his life in samadhi in the forest. Rather he is one of those unique sadhus and rare yogis who has extensively utilized his yoga shakti for the welfare and benefit of all humanity, which is why he is the unquestioned monarch of millions of devotees and disciples in India and abroad.

O triumphant hero on the spiritual battlefield! May your victorious journey be full of auspiciousness. May God and Ma Ganga give you their choicest blessings!

*Satyam bhaktam sadaa shaantam tattvajnamchaiva yoginam  
Sivaanandam cha tachchhishyam satyaanandam namaamyaham.*

I bow to Swami Sivananda and his disciple, Swami Satyananda, who are the very embodiments of truth, devotion and eternal peace; who have realized the Ultimate Principle and who are yogis supreme!



**M**unger is Sage Mudgal's *tapobhoomi*, the place where he performed his sacred austerities. Here the Ganga turns her direction and begins to flow northward, creating a sparkling crescent that encircles the town from three sides. After slaying Tadaka and ensuring the safe completion of Sage Vishwamitra's yajna, Lord Rama had passed through Sage Gautama's ashram and eventually rested at the famous Kashtaharani Ghat in Munger, before proceeding on to Janakpur to attend Sita's *swayamvara*, where she would choose a husband. Munger is a place steeped in history.

The sacred land of Bihar was home to Maharishi Valmiki's ashram, where Ma Sita had given birth to Luv and Kush. There Sage Valmiki had given them a training and an education commensurate with the character and stature of their heroic father, Rama, the scion of the illustrious suryavamshi Ikshvaku dynasty. So much so that the two princes were able to humble the all-conquering army of Ayodhya when it arrived at the doorstep of their ashram. On this sacred soil the epic *Ramayana* was composed, which is the most relevant scripture for this age.

Lord Krishna, together with Bhima and Arjuna, had come to Rajgir, the capital of Jarasandha. Lord Buddha was also born on the sacred soil of Bihar. He roamed the length and breadth of Bihar with a retinue of thousands of monks. Lord Mahavira also graced the soil of this region with his sacred feet. Fortunate indeed is the land of Bihar.

Lord Shiva is ever-present here in the form of Baidyanatheshwar. The Mandrachal mountain, which was placed on the tortoise avatar of Lord Vishnu and used as the churning stick during the churning of the ocean by the gods and demons, is also situated here. Lord Vamana had performed austerities on this very mountain. The land of Bihar has indeed been a playground for the enactment of God's manifold lilas.

In Saharsa district, there is a village named Mahishi. Today it is an ordinary village, but there was a time when it was the village of the great karma kandin, Mandana Mishra. Jagadguru Shankaracharya had come all the way from Kerala to this village to debate with Mandana Mishra. Mandana Mishra eventually acknowledged defeat. Accepting the discipleship of Shankaracharya under the name of Sureshwaracharya, he proceeded southwards, but the ruins of his house and the temple of his kuladevi Ugratara still survive to this day.

### **Founding of the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger**

Magnanimous and large-hearted kings such as Karna ruled on the sanctified soil of Munger, and in the present age his place has been taken by a householder saint, Raibahadur Kedarnath Goenka. Drawn by his love and affection, Swami Satyananda stayed at his place, Ananda Bhavan, and performed intense sadhana there. During his sadhana he received the darshan, blessings and mandate of his great guru, and began to shine like a divine beacon. Goenkaji was already running a temple, hospital, dharmashala, school and college in Munger. Only an ashram was missing from the list, and now that deficiency had also been made up. Completing the ashram in January 1964, he finally bound Swami Satyam to the town of Munger.

All the devotees, disciples and acquaintances of Swamiji received an invitation: "On 19th January 1964, the auspicious day of Basant Panchami and Saraswati Pooja, the ashram will be inaugurated and the akhanda jyoti will be lit. You are all

invited to be a part of this event and receive the blessings of the Divine.”

Devotees and disciples poured in from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bengal, Gujarat, Orissa and other provinces. During the auspicious Saraswati pooja, to the accompaniment of bhajans, kirtans and mantras, Swami Satyananda lit the akhanda jyoti, a symbol of the glorious tradition and radiant potential of yoga.

While lighting the Sivananda jyoti, a teardrop rolled down the face of this otherwise impassive and unattached sannyasin, as if a drop of Ganga water had fallen off the matted locks of Lord Shiva to wash the feet of the guru. The guru's light spread all over the deserving disciple and his message of yoga began spreading in all directions.

After being installed as a paramahansa as per the directive of his guru, and having lit the eternal flame in memory of his guru in Bihar School of Yoga, of which he was the acharya, Swami Satyananda took a vow that he would not leave the ashram for three years. To conduct yoga camps, shivirs and conventions, he would be sending his sannyasin disciples instead. He himself would follow the stipulations of his vow to the letter.

Swamiji also inaugurated the Satyananda Yoga Research Library on this occasion. “I'll stay in the ashram,” he said, “and conduct classes and give satsangs during the fifteen-day courses. From time to time I'll also conduct conventions. Special programs will be organized on Basant Panchami, Guru Poornima, Sivananda Janmotsav and other important occasions. Devotees and disciples can come here whenever they want.”

The main purpose behind Swamiji leaving the parivrajaka lifestyle and adopting the role of a paramahansa acharya is the effective propagation of the yoga tradition of his guru, Swami Sivananda.

*Hamsa*, the swan, symbolizes a certain stage in a sannyasin's life, wherein the swan of his spirit stays put in Manasarovar, higher consciousness, and doesn't go anywhere. This is a

stage of human evolution which is reflected externally in the observance of certain rules and disciplines.

It is true that Swami Sivananda is no longer physically present amidst us. It is also true that great saints never die. Their mortal coil may disappear, but the true essence of their spirit permeates each and every corner of creation. The power and radiance that had come together in the form of Swami Sivananda is now illuminating the hearts of millions around the globe.

It is a matter of great pride for all of us that our Gurudev is a great yogi himself and that our Param Gurudev was a world renowned spiritual personality. Not only was Swami Sivananda a great saint, but we are all the more indebted to him because he created a spiritual dynamo in the shape of Swami Satyananda for the welfare and guidance of the world. Blessed are both guru and disciple! Our humble salutations at their feet.

Fifteen-day courses soon began at the Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Ashram, in right earnest. The classes were conducted by Swamiji himself. Asana and pranayama in the mornings, followed by a light breakfast of porridge, then chanting of the *Gita* and the Upanishads, followed by lunch at 10 am. From 1 pm onwards there would be likhit japa, nada yoga, yoga nidra, karma yoga for an hour or so and then dinner at 5 pm. After dinner, there would be bhajan, kirtan and satsang. Lights out by 8 pm. Shankhaprakshalana on the fourth day. *Mouna vrat*, unbroken silence, on the thirteenth day. The same routine would be followed that day, except in pin-drop silence. At 4 pm, Swamiji would say “Hari Om”, everyone would respond with “Hari Om” and the mouna would come to an end. Everyone would sit on the lawn and drink porridge, followed by dinner and bhajan-satsang. In this manner, mouna and fasting went hand in hand. On the fourteenth day, the routine would be followed till 2 pm, after which chanting of the *Ramayana* would begin. The townsfolk would join in the *Ramayana* chanting as well. Arati was conducted at 5 pm, followed by prasad and dinner. Often

on that concluding day of the course, some special delicacies would come from Goenkaji's Lakshmi Bhavan. And on the fifteenth day, Swamiji would bid farewell to the participants.

Slowly the attendance at the courses began to increase and the additional participants were lodged in the adjoining Goenka dharmashala. Books on *Ajapa Japa Sadhana*, *Japa Yoga*, *Asana Pranayama*, *Moola Bandha*, *Samadhi Vidya* and *Swara Yoga* were published in Hindi and English. *Vairagya Vihar*, a translation of Bhartihari's *Vairagya Shatak* in Hindi verse, was also published. Swamiji had composed this beautiful poetic translation during summer holidays in his ancestral village of Bhikiyasen in 1938, at the tender age of fifteen!

During Chaitra Navaratri of that year, the following article written by Sri D.N. Gupta, the editor of *Sacchi Baat*, was published in *Yoga Vidya*.

### **The soil of Munger and the tapasya of a sannyasin**

Religion and spirituality have declined sharply in the modern era. The sentiments and feelings behind our worship of Ma Durga or Kali have been diluted over the years, and today our religious feelings have become confined to the shrill sounds heard from the blaring loud-speakers adorning our temples and shrines.

But this year in the ashram I saw the festival of Ramnavami conducted with the purity and fervour that was the hallmark of our culture. About two hundred and fifty people, the majority being educated ladies from well-to-do families, converged at the Bihar School of Yoga on Ramnavami where they participated in a night-long vigil and then sang Rama kirtans with Sri Swamiji at the conclusion of the chanting. The entire atmosphere was saturated with peace, devotion and serenity.

A young girl came forward to sing a bhajan thereafter. In a soft, melodious voice, she paid glowing tribute to Tulsidasji, the composer of the *Ramacharitamanas*. Her voice gradually became softer and softer and the bhajan came to a serene ending. Maintaining her quiet, dignified

composure, the girl returned to her place. There was no clapping of hands or any other gesture of appreciation. The atmosphere remained sacred and peaceful. This was followed by Sri Swamiji's satsang, and finally prasad was distributed to everyone.

What was the condition of this place till a few months ago? People hesitated to come here, but now, as if by the magic of Aladdin's lamp, this place has been transformed into a bustling, dynamic ashram. The ashram is verily a temple, but with no idols or deities, save for a lamp which will remain lit till eternity. This temple is dedicated to the loving memory of the master yogi, Swami Sivananda, and, following his example, is totally shorn of any pomp or pageantry. No gaudy pictures or statues, just the faint smile of the saint of Rishikesh that seems to pervade the entire place.

Just as the Sivalaya temple, Dharmashala, Chandikasthan, etc., owe their existence to the Goenka family, this beautiful ashram and this young sannyasin, who has dedicated his life to the regeneration of yoga, are here because of Sri Kedarnath Goenka.

The Goenka family has contributed a lot to society. This place, which had been left neglected for so long, has suddenly come alive after the construction of the ashram. The pure and beautiful atmosphere of the adjoining Sivalaya temple has also been magnified with the coming up of this ashram.

Many people come to this ashram with physical ailments and mental anxieties, and through the wondrous effects of its special environment find the peace and solace they were missing all along in life. For every newcomer, the ashram is a window into an entirely different world, a world of peace and purity.

Things of historical value and interest should be preserved so that future generations can appreciate them. It may very well turn out that this modern yoga ashram and the ancient historical ruins opposite it become the centre



of attraction for seekers and aspirants from all over the globe. Only then will the ancient glory of this sacred land be revived.

This dream of Sri D.N. Gupta, whom everyone fondly called ‘Dadaji’, finally materialized many years later. This article expressing his dream was written in 1964, and the dream came true in 1978.

Swami Satyananda’s mere presence and company are enough to transform the lives of people. We find a perfect example of that in the following article written by Kumari Ratna in *Yoga Vidya*.

### **Touchstone**

This incident occurred many years ago. Sri Swamiji had come to our place and he was scheduled to give satsang that evening. Despite the objections of her family members, Ratna, the very embodiment of stubbornness and obstinacy, made her way to a cinema hall instead that evening. When the show ended and I returned home at 10 pm, I was stunned to see Sri Swamiji sitting at the entrance. He hadn’t gone to sleep yet, he was sitting on an easy chair outside. My feet turned to stone. Neither could I slip inside nor did I have the courage to remain in Sri Swamiji’s presence. I had been caught red-handed. I was trying to tiptoe inside, when Sri Swamiji called out, “Ratna, come here. Where had you gone?”

Inadvertently the truth slipped out, “To the movie theatre.”

“Which movie?”

“*Hum pannchi ek daal ke* (We are birds of one tree),” I replied.

Sri Swamiji motioned me to sit down. I understood that I was in for a sound scolding. I had no option but to sit.

“Arre, all the birds are from one tree only, but they are sitting on different branches. Take me for example. My branch bears forth nice, sweet fruits. There is no problem

at all on the path I've chosen in life. It is easy, littered with flowers as it were. I don't have to worry about going to the office or earning my daily bread. But do you know what kind of fruits are hanging on the branch you are sitting on? Mouth-watering from the outside but bitter from the inside!"

I was in no mood to listen to a lecture at this hour of the night. A wave of anger arose within, 'What a cranky man! Yesterday he was saying that sannyasa life is like walking on the razor's edge and now he is saying exactly the opposite.' But I kept my thoughts to myself. For a while, he engaged me in small talk and then said:

"Tell me one thing, Ratna. If you were taken to a very foul-smelling place and given an injection that somehow made you oblivious to the stench, what would happen?"

I smiled at his seeming ignorance, "That's obvious isn't it? Nothing would happen at first, but later that foul smell would definitely show its harmful effects."

"Ratna," he said in a more serious tone, "later on you will study in psychology that the human mind has three components, the conscious, the subconscious and the unconscious. The mind always imbibes the negative things first. We never realize when and how those negative things accumulate in the unconscious mind, because at present we are under the influence of the conscious mind's 'injection'.

"I am not saying that you should refrain from movies completely. Watch them, but gradually reduce the quantity. Once a doctor gave an interesting piece of advice to an alcoholic: 'No harm in drinking liquor every day, but on the first day after drinking one glass, fill the empty space in the liquor bottle with water. The next day, again drink a glass and fill the remaining space in the bottle with plain water. Repeat this for a few days.' The alcoholic followed the advice. And a day came when there was no liquor left in the bottle, only water remained, and the

alcoholic developed a dislike for liquor. In the same manner, one day you won't wish to see a movie at all.

"Every being on this planet is walking on some path or the other. Even a donkey is doing so. But even after walking a hundred miles, a donkey remains a donkey. Only man has the potential to either degenerate or become divine after walking a hundred miles. Of what use is the life that arises like an ocean wave and after hitting the coast again vanishes into the ocean? Don't you wish that even after crossing over to the other side, people gather at your grave, offer flowers in your memory and your name is written in golden letters on the pages of history?

"Both good and bad things are sold in the marketplace of this world. You can buy whatever you want. But remember that when someone ends up buying pain, the accompanying tears seem sweet rather than salty. The flower can be plucked only after wading through thorns, and perfume extracted only after crushing the flower. Make your mind like a flower. Crushing its myriad colours and shapes, extract nectar out of it. Life is short, and the vanities of life are fleeting, but if you want, you can make a mark for yourself. No one is a Gandhi or a Buddha by birth."

Swamiji finished speaking, and my reverie was suddenly broken. What magic Swamiji's words have! They never fail to touch the innermost core of one's being. His words are simple and straightforward, but they are so inspiring that they can change the course of one's life. I had heard a lot about 'touchstones' but this is the first that I've seen. Whoever comes into contact with Swamiji is completely transformed, his ideas and attitudes are completely changed.

These words of Swamiji's stay ever fresh in my memory. Whenever life is passing through a dark phase, these jewels light up my path and inspire me to keep walking on the path he has shown.

### **Different activities and programs in the Munger ashram**

On 14th July, the first anniversary of Swami Sivananda's mahasamadhi was observed. Amidst the chanting of bhajans and kirtans, one hundred and eight poor people from the neighbourhood were sumptuously fed and given blankets as prasad. In the evening satsang, Sri Swamiji related his experiences with Swami Sivananda.

On the morning of Guru Poornima, after havan and pooja were over, a Parsi lady from Bombay lit the *akhandā agni*, the eternal fire in the havan kund. The fire in this kund will forever be kept alive with wood from the mango tree.

On 8th September, Swami Sivananda's seventy-seventh birth anniversary was celebrated. The vice-chancellor of Bhagalpur University, Dr Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, presided over the function. In his benedictory speech he said, "Swamiji is repaying his debt to his guru by spreading the message of yoga for attaining strength and serenity. It is a matter of great pride at Bihar School of Yoga, people from all countries and religions come to learn and practise yoga." The function was attended by the state labour minister, religious affairs minister, public welfare minister, education minister, the speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the personal physician to the President of India, Dr Dukhan Ram, among others. The dignitaries went around the ashram and expressed their satisfaction and joy. The program ended with a musical performance by Sri Chandrasekhar Khan, a famous musician from Bihar.

Later that year, construction work started on Yoga Nidra Vihar, adjacent to Panchavati (Sri Swamiji's room).

Sri Radheshyam Agrawal, an advocate, social worker and sadhaka of repute from Nandgram, has been associated with Swamiji since 1956. He had been to several places earlier for sadhana, but after meeting Swamiji he finally found his path. After the construction of the ashram in Munger he went there to participate in a course and at the conclusion of the course, he was asked to give a vote of thanks on behalf of all the participating sadhakas:

A vote of thanks is a formality conducted in meetings and conventions, but this yoga school is a place where each and every activity has a deep and sublime philosophy behind it. The sublimation of the mind and the intellect leads to the development of the heart and, offering this heart of mine to Bihar School of Yoga and Paramahansa Satyanandaji, I would like to say something on behalf of all the aspirants.

I've stayed in many ashrams and seen many more from outside. I found something of note in some of these places, got a little satisfaction in others, but nowhere did I find total fulfilment. Everywhere the same basic problem remained – what is the sadhana that should be done when we return home? My thoughts kept hovering around this question. Even if one were to go to the Himalayas, what is the sadhana one is supposed to do there . . .

Today I am extremely happy to state that after staying in this ashram for fifteen days, whatever I've managed to practise under the guidance of respected Swamiji, whatever inspiration I've managed to imbibe for the future, has put to rest all my doubts and questions. The most difficult thing in the practice of yoga is to find the right path for oneself. Once the right way is found, the aspirant will definitely reach his goal. How quickly he will traverse the path depends entirely upon his innate potential and the effort he puts into his sadhana.

It is indeed the good fortune of the citizens of Munger that the Himalayas, the cradle of yoga, have literally come down into their little town in the form of this yoga school. Isn't it a coincidence that the Ganga that originates in the Himalayan peaks has come down to cradle this place in her lap? The people of Munger should know about the unique qualities of this ashram, which have ensured a bright future for itself and the town of Munger.

1. The activities of this yoga ashram have been organized in such a manner that interest and attraction towards

the science of yoga is aroused even in the most ordinary aspirant, whereas in other ashrams, even expert aspirants are unable to find the right guidance or motivation. This school is engaged in the laudable task of moulding clay-like aspirants into finished pots, which when properly baked in the fire of sadhana will be of much use to the society and nation.

2. The syllabus followed by this school is concise and interesting, and it is the only institute in India, and probably the whole world, where the yoga classes are conducted in the pathshaala tradition. It is a place where learning and understanding go hand in hand, a library and a laboratory rolled into one.

3. Just as God grants help to all classes of devotees: the artas, the artharthis, the jñignasus and the jñanis, so do aspirants of all kinds find shelter in the shade of this institution. This ashram is like a beautiful stream carrying the life-giving water of the science of yoga. Here the aspirants have an opportunity to achieve physical health through asana and pranayama, mental health through pratyahara and dharana, and spiritual experience through higher practices such as chidakasha dharana, etc.

4. Aspirants rarely receive personal attention in other ashrams. The aspirants are always dying to meet the swami-in-charge but he never has time for them, whereas in this school, Sri Swamiji himself is ever ready and eager to meet the participants, asking them about their problems and giving them sound advice regarding them.

5. Maximum practice and learning in the minimum possible time – this is a unique feature of the courses conducted at this school. Within a short span of fifteen days one acquires sufficient knowledge and experience to continue the practices on one's own. Yoga is a vast and serious subject, which is hard to understand and imbibe even after staying and studying for years at other ashrams, but here one learns quite a lot in only fifteen days. This ashram is really a boon for sincere aspirants.

6. Special classes are conducted for ladies and children. There are very few ashrams which provide opportunities and encouragement for women. This school has been quite successful in generating interest in children towards this subject and planting positive samskaras in them.

It won't be out of place to mention here that one cannot find such training in yoga at such a low cost. The ashram charges only twenty-one rupees for the fifteen-day course, which includes board, lodging and all other expenses.

In the end, on behalf of all aspirants I would like to express my deep gratitude to the management and volunteers of this yoga school and especially to Sri Swamiji.

What a beautiful and inspiring description of the ashram! The different activities of the ashram began to be conducted in a regular and efficient manner, and visitors and aspirants kept coming in greater and greater numbers. The work spread, the fame spread and Swamiji's infectious enthusiasm and zeal also spread to everyone.

### **First International Yoga Convention, 1964**

Sri Swamiji decided to organize a yoga convention from 1st to 7th November. All his disciples, devotees and associates were very happy to hear this news.

Besides the constant support and encouragement of Sri Kedarnath Goenka, his son, Krishna Kant Goenka, also contributed a lot to Sri Swamiji's mission. As his secretary, he carried out Swamiji's instructions and orders. Plans were drawn up for the convention and soon preparations began in right earnest with the publishing of cards and pamphlets. Information about the upcoming program was published in the *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* magazines as well.

Congratulatory messages were received from the President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, and the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The jagadgurus sent their blessings and good wishes. Swami Chidananda came from Rishikesh as the chief guest of the program. Swamiji's disciples, devotees, well-

wishers and members of the International Yoga Fellowship came in their thousands to attend the convention.

Sri Satyendra Nath Sinha (speaker of the Bihar legislature), Sri Anand Mohan Sahay (former secretary to the Government of India), Dr Dukhan Ram (MLA), Sri K.P. Singh, Sri N.K. Sinha, Sri I.N. Thakur, Sri Vinodananda Jha, Swami Atmananda from Raipur Vivekananda Ashram and Dr Baldev Prasad Mishra from Nandgram were some of the notable dignitaries who attended.

The convention was inaugurated on 1st November by Sri Anant Shayanam Iyengar, the Governor of Bihar. All the arrangements for the convention, including board, lodging and program venue, had been made at the Goenka dharmashala. Four sessions were conducted daily and Sri Swamiji would be present at all four. Yoga researchers and practitioners from far-off places had come to the convention and they lectured on many different aspects of yoga. There were discourses by the assembled saints and swamis as well. Everyone was greatly moved by the discourses of Swami Chidananda and Swami Satyananda. The two guru bhais related many anecdotes and experiences of their guru ashram.

The effort put in by all the volunteers was praiseworthy indeed. Sri Swamiji had trained them very well. The entire seven-day convention was conducted in a beautiful manner. A souvenir book, *Mechanics of Meditation*, was also released on the occasion, which was very well received by the public. This book has been translated into Hindi as well and has gone through many reprints.

After the convention, reviews of the literature being published by Bihar School of Yoga, including the *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* magazines, were printed in the leading newspapers of Delhi, Punjab, Madras, U.P. and other places. A wave of curiosity and interest in yoga was generated in the public. Letters began pouring in from all sides. Since Sri Swamiji was not travelling at all, he sent Swami Yogashakti to Chandigarh, Delhi and Bombay. She carried Swamiji's message to all these places. She distributed ashram literature and showed films



related to yoga sadhana in the ashram. Reading about these programs in the newspapers or watching these films, people started organizing programs and camps in their cities, and many people started coming to Munger as well.

### **Activities during 1965**

In January 1965, on the occasion of Basant Panchami, the first anniversary of the ashram's founding was celebrated with a three-day satsang program.

On 10th March, Maharshi Mehiji visited the ashram. A special satsang program was organized that day. It was also the final day of the fourth yoga course of the year and the participants were given certificates. A film on asanas was also shown on the occasion.

Swami Yogashakti again left on a tour on 12th May, carrying the blessings and message of Sri Swamiji. There was great interest in and strong support for Swamiji's mission in Tatanagar, Raigarh, Bilaspur, Raipur, Bhilai, Nandgram, Gondia, Balaghat, Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta. Programs were being organized in all these places, but Swamiji would not be travelling for the next three years. So he started sending his sannyasin disciples to all these places. Meanwhile people were coming from Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and overseas to learn yoga at the school.

On 14th July 1965, Swami Sivananda's 'nirvana day' was observed. A feast was organized in the ashram for one hundred and eight local destitutes, who received kurtas as prasad. Sri Swamiji himself served the food. The entire Goenka family and other devotees also assisted with the serving. The feast was followed by *Ramayana* chanting, kirtan and prasad distribution. In the evening, a film depicting the life of Jesus Christ was shown.

Guru Poornima was celebrated on 17th July with havan, pooja and prasad distribution. People had come from many different places in large numbers. The evening satsang and kirtan program was attended by the local townspeople as well.

Havan and satsang were conducted on the morning of 26th July. A meeting followed in which it was decided that the second International Yoga Convention would be held from 1st to 7th November. Plans were drawn up for this event and invitations were dispatched to many saints and scholars. Soon the preparations were going on in full swing.

On 8th September, Swami Sivananda's birthday, a special program of satsang, bhajan and *Ramayana* chanting was organized.

On 15th September, Acharya Vinoba Bhave visited Munger. He arrived in the ashram at 9 am and was welcomed by Sri Swamiji. The two of them had a fruitful discussion. After lunch, a meeting of volunteers from the Sarvodaya movement was held in the ashram hall. Vinobaji and his associates were greatly impressed by Sri Swamiji's ashram and mission. They expressed their keen desire to participate in the second yoga convention. Vinobaji and his associates left the ashram for their next destination at 6 pm after dinner.

Mrs Vijaylakshmi Pandit toured Bihar in the month of October and visited the ashram as well. The ashram and her interaction with Sri Swamiji left a great impact on her. When she started her speech after Swamiji's satsang, she continued speaking for three hours. She left the ashram in a very happy frame of mind.

### **Second International Yoga Convention, 1965**

A seven-day convention began on 1st November, in which more than 1,500 national and international delegates participated. It was inaugurated by HH Swami Niranjan Dev Teerth, Shankaracharya of Puri Peeth, and brought to a close by Sri Anant Shayanam Iyengar, the Governor of Bihar. Dr Sampoorananda, the Governor of Rajasthan, released the souvenir volume.

The convention was attended, among others, by Swami Chidananda from Rishikesh; Swami Ranganathananda from Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta; Prof Tripurari Chakravarti, Swami Atmananda, Raipur; Maharshi Mehi

Dasji, Bhagalpur; Yogiraj Sri Nitya Chaitanya, Delhi; Sri Madhusudanacharya, Rajgir; Srikant Thakur, Editor of *Aryavarta*, Patna; Mother Mary, Rome; Dr Bruce Robertson, Canada; Mrs Shakuntala Goswami, Vrindavan; Viragiji, Varanasi; Swami Sadhanananda, Assam; Yogiraj Manuvarya, Ahmedabad; Sri Janardan Swami, Nagpur; Sri Ram Kumar from the Yoga Association of Calcutta; Sri Prakash Chandra Sur, Mrs Sumitra Devi (Information Minister, Bihar), Sri Siva Shankar, Sri Vinodananda Jha (ex-Chief Minister), Sri Baleshwar Ram (Tourism Minister, Bihar) and Dr Dukhan Ram, Patna.

A remarkable thing happened during the convention. The sisters of the American-run Notre Dame Institute in Jamalpur side-stepped their strict rules and regulations and participated in the convention on all seven days. Four sessions were conducted daily and Sri Swamiji would lecture in each session. The theme of the convention was 'The Role and Potential of Yoga in Helping Humanity'. All the assembled saints and dignitaries expressed their views on the subject. A souvenir titled *Dynamics of Yoga* was also released. The convention ended on a positive note and the assembled guests and devotees returned home with renewed zeal and enthusiasm.

### **Activities during 1966**

The first Inter-regional Yoga Convention was organized in Gondia from 28th to 30th January 1966. Aspirants and devotees converged from Nagpur, Amravati, Khamgaon, Nandgram, Bhilai, Raipur, Bilaspur and many other places. The convention was conducted by Swami Yogashakti. A 153-year-old saint from Mandala, the venerable Swami Sitaram Dasji, had also come to grace the convention. After his benedictory speech, Sri Viragiji released the convention souvenir. Janardan Swami from Nagpur and Swami Prarthananda from Munger also gave discourses. Mrs Shakuntala Goswami gave discourses on the *Ramayana* every day. Kumari Ratna Srivastava gave a speech on behalf of all the lady delegates. Sri Dharmadas Mishra from Raipur-Rewa

took sannyasa initiation. The three-day convention turned out to be a huge success.

On 7th February 1966, Swami Chidananda, President of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, came to the ashram as the chief guest for the second anniversary celebrations of the Bihar School of Yoga. After speeches by the chief guest and other assembled dignitaries, Sri Swamiji gave a stirring discourse on the *Gita*, wherein he highlighted the importance of karma yoga. In the end, he exhorted everyone present to contribute wholeheartedly towards the yoga movement and help spread the message of yoga far and wide, instead of creating a mere personality cult around him.

On 2nd July 1966, Guru Poornima Mahotsav was celebrated at the Bihar School of Yoga. In his discourse, Sri Swamiji explained that this sacred day is not meant to celebrate the birth of any particular guru, rather it is dedicated to all brahmanishta, God-realized gurus.

In the afternoon, a meeting was held in which Sri Swamiji outlined the plans for the third International Yoga Convention to be held from 1st to 7th November of that year. After delegating different responsibilities to the different members, he mentioned that Ranchhodji, a four-hundred-year-old jnani and kriya yogi, would be coming to Munger to bless this event. In the tradition he is known simply as Babaji, and he is renowned for the eye camps and communal kitchens that he organizes in different places.

The founder of the Maitreya Buddhist University in Norway, eighty-year-old Mr Inarbear would also be attending the third yoga convention, and leading the group of overseas delegates.

From that very evening, a systematic study of the *Gita* was taken up under the guidance of Sri Swamiji, which went on till 30th October.

On 14th July, the 'nirvana day' of Swami Sivananda, a feast was organized for poor and destitute people and Sri Swamiji gave satsang thereafter. A special satsang program was organized on 8th September also.

### **Third International Yoga Convention, 1966**

Preparations for the third International Yoga Convention to be held from 1st to 7th November started in full swing. Many saints and scholars began arriving for the convention, including Kriyayogi Baba, Buddhist Yogi Inarbear, Norway; Swami Chidananda, Mata Sevananda and Swami Karunananda, Rishikesh; Sri Biragiji, Sri Golwalkar, Sri S.M. Bhatt and Yogacharya Major K.M. Kamath, Bombay; Sri R.C. Gupta, Simla; Swami Sivananda, Assam; Dr Baldev Prasad Mishra, Nandgram; Sri M.D. Jafette, Bombay; Tripurari Chakravarti, Calcutta; Yogacharya K.B. Sahasrabuddhe, Raigarh; Paramahansa Ramhridaya Das, Varanasi; Sri Manuvarya, Ahmedabad; Parivrajaka Sadhanananda and Justice M.L. Abhayankar, Bombay; Sri J. Mishra, Darbhanga; Sri B.P. Sinha and Sri Jagat Narayan Lal, Patna; William Hooveringer, USA; thirteen-year-old wonder girl Kumari Saroj Bala; Yogacharya Baidyuk Pasek, Poland; Sri T.N. Bharde, Bombay; Yogacharya Sue Holmes, Mexico; Yogacharya Dr R. Polderman, Holland; Dr Sharma, Raigarh; Swami Poornananda, Kerala; Shanti Kumar Bhatt, Bombay; Swami Nitya Chaitanya Yati, Delhi; Swami Sharanananda, Vrindavan; Yogacharya Roma Blair, Sydney; Yukiko Fujita, Japan; Swami Atmananda, Raipur; Yogi Himalaya, Kerala; Prabha Atre, All India Radio, Bombay and members of the Yoga Association, Calcutta, for the demonstration of asana.

About two thousand national and international delegates had converged for the convention. They included Sri Swamiji's devotees and disciples besides members and volunteers from the International Yoga Fellowship. As the fame of Swamiji and his work spread, so did the number of aspirants coming to Munger. A huge marquee and stage had been set up in the Goenka dharmashala for the event. The catering arrangements had also been made in the dharmashala. Hundreds of volunteers were engaged in different activities related to the convention. Devotees and acquaintances were also lending a helping hand.

But one question was weighing heavily on everyone's mind. Swami Satyananda had hinted about entering into mahasamadhi after the third International Yoga Convention. This was the reason behind the unease and unrest being experienced by his disciples and followers.

The souvenir for 1966 was titled *Science of Yoga*. Mr Pai from Bombay had also come to attend the convention. He had come during the previous two conventions as well. He filmed the entire proceedings from inauguration to conclusion. The film that he made is being shown in the ashram from time to time.

After the inauguration of the convention on 1st November, Sri Swamiji declared, "Like the Ganga, yoga will also have to come down from the Himalayas to the vast, wide plains." Swami Chidananda spoke on, 'Human Life – a Priceless Opportunity'. Swami Sevananda, a South American disciple of Swami Sivananda, shared her experiences in the field of yoga.

Sri Karunananda, an Australian disciple of Swami Sivananda, presently living as a kaupeen-clad ascetic yogi in Kurukshetra, gave an amazing demonstration of asana and pranayama. His bhajan *Brahma murari surarchita lingam* and kirtans sung to the rhythm of the kartal enchanted everyone. On popular demand, he sang kirtan every day.

Sri Swamiji gave discourses and satsangs in each session of the seven-day program. The assembled saints and scholars also expressed their views on different aspects of yoga. As in past years, Sri Swamiji was accorded a civic reception by the town of Munger on 6th November, in which he was felicitated by all the assembled dignitaries, devotees and disciples.

Thereafter, Sri Swamiji handed over the acharyaship of the school to his disciple Swami Atmananda. In front of thousands of delegates and visitors, he placed his dhoti over her shoulders, signifying her anointment as the acharya. What will happen next? This was the question uppermost in everyone's mind.

Messages of felicitation and good wishes were received from Mrs Indira Gandhi and other national leaders. Sri Swamiji's dedicated followers and well-wishers had already

expressed their support and best wishes. The only thing that remained was the instruction of Gurudev. Sri Swamiji was waiting for an indication of his future course of action from him. He kept praying for guidance and instructions.

And then the blessings of the great guru came pouring down upon the worthy disciple. Besides the blessings, Sri Swamiji received a special command from his guru as well:

Forget samadhi for now! You have much work to accomplish. You are the Bhagiratha of the Yoga-Ganga, you have to bring this life-giving science from the snowy caves of the Himalayas into the strife-ridden lives of common men and women all over the globe. You will keep receiving my instructions and guidance.

The last day's program ended amidst great joy and bliss. All the participants returned to their home towns with Gurudev's blessings and renewed enthusiasm.

Sri Swamiji's fame and the work he was undertaking kept spreading. Mrs Vijaya Premniti, a close associate of Sri Swamiji, expressed her views on this subject in an article published in the November 1963 issue of *Yoga Vidya*. At the time, the Sivananda Ashram was still in the middle of construction. How apt her views are:

### **A sannyasin's dream**

If you were to carry out research on dreams, you would realize that the mandate to create great institutions and movements usually comes to great souls through the medium of dreams. It is our Gurudev's dream that he will bring out the ancient science of yoga from the tomb it was buried in and not rest until he has successfully integrated it into modern culture and civilization.

Sri Swamiji is a complete and full-blown yogi. Through his personal practice, he has tested the principles of yoga and found this science handed down by the ancient rishis to be completely true and valid. Using these principles,

he is creating a foundation for the coming culture and civilization. The foundation and structure of human society has always been fabricated by the great visionaries and seers. The common man only knows how to live within that pre-fabricated structure. From time to time, there appear extraordinary men and women, who are not swayed by hardships, insults, neglect and scorn, but leave an indelible mark on society.

Our Guruji has also undertaken a mission whose importance and far-reaching effects may possibly be overlooked by lay people, but our coming generations will definitely realize the contribution that Sri Swamiji's various all-round efforts have had on the health and spirit of our society. His contribution towards bringing ancient practices and sciences to light, and towards reinstating the lost glory of the science of yoga without compromising its basic values has been unparalleled. He has put yoga on an equal footing with science and demonstrated it to be an extremely useful body of knowledge for modern society. It is as relevant in this Kali yuga age of iron, steel, coal, copper, steam, electricity and atomic energy as it was during the Satya yuga age of rishis and sages. Sri Swamiji has thrown an open challenge to the so-called educated people of our times to practise a little before speaking on a subject they have no knowledge of.

Sri Swamiji is a true seer. He has a clear vision of the future course of civilization. He used to have glimpses of the future, even faces of unknown people during dream, meditation and trance. He would hear voices in deep states of meditation. He knew about many aspirants, associates and disciples beforehand, he knew that they would provide great help and support in his mission. Even today Sri Swamiji knows exactly what needs to be done in a particular area of work and how to lay the foundation for that work. He knows the art of presenting the yogic culture to the common man in a scientific manner. And he shares his ideas with any and everyone willing to pay heed.



There are many people like Satyavrat, Basanti, Mrs Adhyavati Sahay, Devidutt Joshi and others who know Swami Satyananda Saraswati from his guru ashram days. There are many who have taken initiation from Swami Sivananda, but consider Swami Satyananda as their sadhana guru. There are many childhood associates and companions of Sri Swamiji present, living in Delhi, Bombay, etc., who have become his disciples and are practising sadhana under his guidance.

It is Sri Swamiji's dream that every person incorporates yoga into their lifestyle just as they have incorporated coats, pants, pyjamas and neckties. The general public lacks the capacity to think or reason on its own, it is always swayed by some external influence. This puts a much greater responsibility on the shoulders of reformers and builders of society. That is the reason why saints and sannyasins take this burden upon their shoulders. Since they have no personal axe to grind, they are the ones who emerge successful in their endeavours as well.

I've seen many people come to Sri Swamiji for help and support – sad and suffering, young and old, men and women alike, and he tells each one a way and method that is most suitable for him or her. How distressed the life of the common man is, how much he needs the light of true knowledge. All this cannot be gauged by high-ranking government officials caught in the hypnosis of perks and salaries. Today everyone looks after his own welfare first and foremost. Only then will he even think of helping someone else. But can a sannyasin ever think like this? Never. He stays true to his chosen path, no matter what obstacles may arise.

With such an iron will and steely determination, Sri Swamiji is going about his task of reviving the ancient yogic culture. Through books, magazines, audio tapes and films, through speeches on campuses and communities all over the country, he is playing but one tune, the melody of yoga. A blissful sannyasin and a radiant yogin, Sri Swamiji is no

longer a mere individual today. Rather he has become an institution in himself. The winds of a sweeping movement are blowing through the pages of the magazines of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement.

Sri Swamiji is establishing a yoga school in Munger in January 1964. Undoubtedly this will be a first of its kind institution in India. There is news that a Yoga Research Institute will also be set up, where the effects of yoga practices on body and mind will be measured and recorded with modern scientific instruments. This institute will also be a first for Bihar, if not the whole of India. With the government also encouraging these efforts, it is my firm conviction that something beautiful will blossom in Bihar.

This article was written in 1963 but it has foretold the future so clearly and crisply. And today Sri Swamiji's dream has definitely come true.

### **Activities during 1967**

A three-day yoga convention was organized in Raigarh from 13th to 15th January. The shivir was inaugurated and conducted by Sri Swamiji himself. Sri Swamiji had undertaken a vow to remain in Munger for three years. Upon the completion of three years, on the occasion of the third yoga convention in November 1966, he had released himself from this binding discipline. And thus on 12th January, beginning his first journey outside Munger, he reached Raigarh.

Many saints and sages, devotees and aspirants had come from different places to attend the three-day convention. The assembled dignitaries delivered lectures and discourses. Sri Swamiji gave satsang in each session, and in the evenings Shakuntala Devi discoursed on the *Ramayana*.

The people of Raigarh had built an ashram, which they wanted Sri Swamiji to run. But Sri Swamiji was hesitant. He kept postponing his decision. First of all, he was never in favour of building ashrams. Now that he had finally built one in Munger, he said that it was more than enough.

Sri Swamiji had first come to Raigarh in November 1956. No one had even bothered to speak to him back then. A rich businessman had even said some harsh words to him, and today that very person is asking to donate an ashram! Isn't fact stranger than fiction?

After insistent requests, Sri Swamiji agreed to inaugurate the ashram on 23rd May. The organizers had another request, to have an akhanda deepak ablaze in their ashram as well. It was finally decided that Sri Swamiji would come with the deepak from Munger on 23rd May and conduct a special three-day program.

Jagadguru Abhinav Vidya Teerth, Shankaracharya of Sharada Peeth, Shringeri, came to Munger on 16th March 1967 and stayed for two days. He was welcomed as per the southern tradition. He had darshan of the akhanda jyoti, the eternal flame, which is kept permanently lit in memory of Swami Sivananda. All the Shankaracharyas carry with them their pooja deities and the *chandramauleshwar lingam* (a shivalingam made of blue sapphire). On the morning of 17th March, a traditional *dugdha abhisheka* (abhisheka with milk) was performed on the shivalingam. The ceremony was completed as per the prescribed norms and rituals with fifty litres of milk. Thousands of devotees and dignitaries had gathered in the grounds of the school to witness this ancient celebrated worship.

Thereafter, the Shankaracharya gave a benedictory speech. He spoke about the life of Swami Sivananda and lauded the efforts of Swami Satyananda in the field of yoga. "Jagadgurus are the eternal founts of the vedic tradition," he said. Adi Shankaracharya had established four maths in the four corners of the country to tie the entire nation in one spiritual thread. The four maths are: Govardhan Peeth at Jagannath Puri in the east, Dwarika Peeth in the west, Joshimath at Badrikashram in the north and Sharada Peeth at Shringeri in the south. The guru parampara of Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, is connected with the Shringeri Math.

In May, the people of Raigarh had two railway coaches reserved for Sri Swamiji's journey from Munger to Raigarh.

About eighty to eighty-five devotees from Munger, Bhagalpur and Chhapra were accompanying Sri Swamiji. Lighting a deepak from the eternal flame at Munger and carrying it in a small temple-like showcase, Sri Swamiji left for Raigarh. On the way, devotees from Calcutta, Kharagpur and Tatanagar also joined the group. The deepak was handled with great care throughout the journey.

On the afternoon of 23rd May, the train reached Raigarh. Hundreds of people had gathered at the station to receive them. As Sri Swamiji alighted with the deepak in his hands, everyone greeted and garlanded him, refreshments were served, bhajans and kirtans were chanted. Half an hour later a public procession started with the playing of a band and the singing of kirtans. The procession slowly wound its way to Hanuman dharmashala where board and lodging arrangements had been made for the entourage. Everyone showered, had lunch and then rested. Many people had come from other towns as well to attend this special program.

Everyone reached the ashram by 4 pm. The deepak was duly installed and this was followed by bhajan, kirtan and satsang. The program continued from morning till evening for the next two days. Handing over the akhanda deepak to Swami Sadhanananda, Sri Swamiji gave instructions regarding the running of the ashram and the yoga teaching to be conducted there. He constituted an executive committee to manage the ashram and having made the necessary arrangements, Sri Swamiji returned to Munger with his devotees. Thus did the first ashram start in Madhya Pradesh. What a quirk of fate that the ashram was founded just a little distance away from the church and hotel where a church father had offered refreshments to a tired, hungry and thirsty Sri Swamiji, many years ago.

### **First Yoga Teacher Training Course**

The demand for trained yoga teachers was increasing in India as well as abroad. Some yoga teachers from overseas had been sponsored by their governments to undergo teacher

training at BSY and they were expected to arrive in July. Sri Swamiji decided that the International Yoga Teacher Training Course would be conducted in Munger. The course would be of nine-months duration, so for this period the fifteen-day courses were transferred from Munger to Raigarh.

A comprehensive syllabus was chalked out for the nine-month course. The goal of this course, conducted from 1st July 1967 to 31st March 1968, was to impart special training in the subtler aspects of yoga to individuals who had some previous background and training in yoga.

Participants from India and overseas started arriving for the course in June itself. Some of the participants had been awarded scholarships by their respective governments. The participants had been informed beforehand through the course prospectus about how difficult and trying the course lifestyle would be. They would have to observe brahmacharya in thought and deed. They would not have any contact with people outside the ashram. Let alone contact, they could not even peep outside the ashram walls.

During the course period, Sri Swamiji will be busy in yoga sadhana with his trainee students. After receiving this training, the students will become the messengers of the Indian spiritual culture and tradition when they return to their respective countries.

#### **Fourth International Yoga Convention in Gondia**

A three-day program was organized in Munger on the eve of Guru Poornima from 18th to 20th July. On the 21st, Guru Poornima was celebrated with great fervour and devotion. Many people came to attend the Guru Poornima celebrations. Devotees from Gondia had also come. An ashram had come up there as well. It was the heartfelt desire of the people of Gondia that Sri Swamiji conduct the fourth International Yoga Convention in Gondia from 1st to 7th November. Sri Swamiji gave his approval and blessings for the Gondia convention, and gave them guidance regarding various organizational matters related to the convention. Many distinguished saints

and scholars had to be invited. He explained in detail whom to invite and what to write in the invitation letters.

The Shankaracharya of Dwarika Peeth, Jagadguru Abhinav Satchidananda, would be invited to inaugurate the convention. A couple of swamis would come from Munger a month or so before the start of the convention. Till then Satyavratji would keep coming now and then to help with the preparations. Sri Swamiji would reach Gondia with his devotees and disciples on 29th October.

Receiving Sri Swamiji's precious advice, instructions and blessings, the devotees of Gondia returned to their hometown where they began printing forms and pamphlets and sending invitation letters.

Satyavratji's activities had become even more hectic since the inception of the Munger ashram. When the mill shut down in April-May 1962, five thousand workers had been rendered jobless. The workers led an agitation, the case went to court, but the dispute still remained unresolved. Eventually the government intervened and took over the mill. After remaining locked up for over fifteen months, the mill finally reopened under the controllership of Sri Raja Ram Gupta. He came and inspected everything, and summoned all the officers for meetings and discussions. Many machines were in a dilapidated condition, owing to disuse. New machines were ordered, old ones were refurbished, the boiler was fired and the mill was operational once again.

Satyavratji was busy with the running of the press and the publishing of books and magazines. He had decided not to return to his old job at the mill. "I have all this work in the press. Then there is the ashram in Munger, which I've to visit every now and then, since Sri Swamiji does not leave Munger at all." Saying thus, Satyavratji did not attend any of the meetings convened by Raja Ram Gupta. The latter sent his peon many times, even rang up a few times, but Satyavratji excused himself each time.

One day Raja Ram Gupta himself came to our house (the press) and said, "I am new to this company and I don't have

much experience in this line of work. You must return to the mill and help me get the mill going again. I've collected all the relevant information and after a week in the saddle, I've gained some hands-on experience as well. I've seen your files and registers, and I've heard a lot of praise about you from others. That is why I've come to fetch you. Without your support I won't be able to run the mill. You handle the mill and at the same time continue to manage your press and the affairs of your guru. You can also go to Munger whenever needed. Once the mill is successfully operational, I won't trouble you. But for the next two or three years, you have to help me. Now that I've come to your doorstep, I won't leave until you agree to come with me."

Satyavratji accompanied him to the mill and reorganized all the affairs of the mill. Old associates were contacted, letters were sent to old customers, and slowly the fortunes of the mill turned. Satyavratji went to live in the mill area, while I continued to stay at the press. The press was running quite well now. We had hired an experienced hand, Anil Rai, who was looking after the entire press operations.

Swami Niranjan was always anxious to go to Munger. After the construction of the ashram there in 1964, he would go there often. Sometimes with Satyavratji, sometimes with Dharmashakti and sometimes all three would go to the ashram together and spend a few days there.

In 1967, Satyavratji went to Munger for the Basant Panchami meeting. Upon returning he told Raja Ram Gupta, "I've worked for three years in the mill since its reopening. Now that it is running smoothly, I think it's time to quit."

Raja Ram Gupta naturally wasn't too keen on his proposal. But Satyavratji reasoned, "I will be staying in this town itself. If and when the need arises, I will definitely help you out; and similarly from time to time I may also request your help. Please allow me to leave now and clear all my dues."

With God's grace, everything worked out smoothly. In April, Satyavratji finally left the mill job and within fifteen days his account was also cleared. In May he left the company

quarters and came to live in the town. Guptaji had wanted him to stay on in the company quarters. "You don't have to quit the company quarters. Stay on for a year or so. There are many people here who left the company seven or eight years ago but are still holding on to their company quarters. Why are you in such a hurry to relinquish yours?" But Satyavratji had made up his mind.

Despite Satyavratji's exit from the mill, his relationship with Raja Ram Gupta remained on the best of terms. Whenever he learnt that Satyavratji was going to Munger, he would send bedsheets or mosquito nets for the ashram. He helped and supported the ashram in any way he could. In May, he went to Raigarh to meet Sri Swamiji whom he respected a lot.

Krishnananda and Prarthanananda came from Munger in September to work for the Gondia convention. On Swamiji's instruction, Satyavratji went to Gondia in October and Prarthanananda returned to Munger. The number of participants was increasing with each successive convention. There was talk of more saints and sages attending this time.

Twenty-five acres of land had been acquired for the Gondia ashram. The place was two kilometres away from the town on Kurwa road. It was planned to establish a 'Sivananda Public School' on the ashram premises. There were also plans to grow vegetables, flowers and fruits. Mr Patwardhan was the Forest Officer of the region at the time. Through his special efforts and the support of the local people the ashram was quickly constructed.

A big marquee had been set up on the grounds of a high school in the heart of the city for the International Convention. Lodging arrangements for the participants had been made in the school premises itself.

*Taming the Kundalini* was the souvenir printed for the convention. Satyavratji was already in Gondia. Annapoorna arrived in Nandgram from Raipur. She, Dharmashakti and Niranjan were to accompany Sri Swamiji to Gondia on 29th October.



Swamiji was due to reach Nandgram by 11 am on the 29th. Three bogies had been reserved for his entourage, which consisted of ninety students from the nine-month Teacher Training Course, besides disciples and devotees from Munger, Bhagalpur, Chhapra and Patna. The train would stop for twenty-five or thirty minutes at each station instead of the stipulated duration of five or ten minutes. Sri Swamiji was coming this way after four years. Thousands of people would crowd at each station, waiting for Swamiji's train to arrive. They would bring such large quantities of fruits, flowers, prasad and refreshments that plenty would remain even after distributing to everyone present on the station!

The train finally arrived in Nandgram at 1 pm. Seeing the vast crowd gathered for his darshan, Swamiji alighted onto the platform. Dharmashakti got on to the train with Niranjana and Annapoorna. An avalanche of flowers, garlands and refreshments was headed their way. The huge crowd was becoming difficult to handle. The train, which would have normally stopped for three minutes, ended up at the platform for thirty minutes. At 1.30 pm the train finally left Nandgram station and after stopping at Dongargarh on the way, it finally reached Gondia at 4 pm. There was such a huge crowd at Gondia station that it took an hour for the volunteers to safely get us out of the station.

Many great saints and mahatmas had come to attend the convention: Jagatguru Sri Satchidananda Maharaj from Dwarkapeeth; 156-year-old Baba Sitaram Das, Mandala; Swami Chidananda and Swami Karunananda, Rishikesh; Swami Manuvarya, Ahmedabad; Swami Atmananda, Raipur; Swami Sharanananda, Vrindavan; Swami Poornananda, Kerala; Swami Sivananda, Assam; Swami Nirmalananda, Australia; Sri Morarji Desai, Sri Babasaheb Bhardre, Sri Basant Rao Naik, Chief Minister, Maharashtra, Sri N.D. Chaudhary, Education Minister, Maharashtra; Swami Karmananda; Dr Tajuk Pasek, Poland; Dr R. Polderman, yoga therapist, Holland; Dr M. D. Jafette, Bombay; A. E. Vikarama, Ceylon; Mrs Sulay Hudson, President of Yoga Institute, Albuquerque;

Yogini, New Mexico; Sri K.S. Kendhe, Puna; Sri K.S. Joshi, Sagar; Vidyamata, Paris; Swami Dayasagar, Paris; Rishiji Maharaj, Paris; Kakasaheb Kelkar, New Delhi; Savita Ben Mehta, Porbandar and Sri Ashok Mehta, Nagpur.

The theme of the convention was 'Introducing Yoga in the Field of Education'. The convention was inaugurated by the Shankaracharya of Dwarikapeeth. Sri Swamiji was present throughout the program, which included satsangs, bhajan and kirtan, and asana demonstrations. In the evenings, Mrs Shakuntala Goswami would discourse on the *Ramayana*. Films on the Bihar School of Yoga were also shown daily.

Three ladies from the nine-month Teacher Training Course were to be given sannyasa initiation at 3 am on 2nd November. Sri Swamiji told Satyavratji, "You also have to take sannyasa today."

"Everything from your side is like a boon," replied Satyavratji, "so the question of accepting or rejecting doesn't arise."

Accordingly four disciples were initiated into sannyasa on the morning of 2nd November, the auspicious day of Diwali: Swami Devatmananda Saraswati, Swami Yogeshwarananda Saraswati, Swami Satyavratnanda Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda Saraswati.

Satsangs, bhajans and kirtans continued throughout the rest of the day. In the evening, the entire city was lit up with thousands of lights. The sparkling firecrackers lit up the night sky and their thunderous noise resounded everywhere. The four newly initiated sannyasins were accorded a civic reception by the citizens of Gondia. Jagadguru Shankaracharya and Sri Swamiji spoke on the occasion.

Throughout the seven-day convention, speakers expressed their views on the ways and means of incorporating yoga into the educational system. Many saints and mahatmas had also graced the convention with their presence. They gave satsangs on yoga and other spiritual topics. For seven days a continuous Yoga-Ganga flowed through the town. On the 6th day, a civic reception was organized to felicitate Sri Swamiji and on the 7th day, the concluding session of the convention

took place. Sri Swamiji left for Munger on the 8th with his disciples, devotees and students. He instructed Swami Satyavratanaanda, his newly initiated sannyasin disciple, to remain in Nandgram and manage the affairs of the press, books and magazines as before.

### **Activities during 1968**

A yoga convention was organized from 1st to 3rd January in Patna. Sri Swamiji conducted the proceedings.

The Gondia ashram was ready by now. The people of Gondia had invited Sri Swamiji for the inauguration ceremony on 12th February. From Gondia, Sri Swamiji was to proceed to Nagpur for a one-day program, then to Bombay for a week-long convention and finally to Muzaffarpur for another week-long program. A letter arrived from Sri Swamiji: "Dharmashakti will accompany me on my trip. After visiting Gondia, Nagpur, Bombay and Muzaffarpur, she will come and stay in Munger for a few days."

Sri Swamiji wrote a separate letter to Niranjana: "Niranjana, I had asked you to attend school to learn the alphabet. You have learnt what you needed to learn. You even write excellent letters now. Everyone here loves to read your letters. The time has now come to decide where you want to live."

And Niranjana immediately made his decision. We didn't have much to say in the matter. We had left everything in Sri Swamiji's hands. "I have decided to go to Munger to live with Swamiji," so saying, Niranjana went to his school and told his headmaster, "I am leaving for Munger. Please strike my name from your rolls."

All his teachers were greatly vexed. They tried to talk him out of his decision, "Stay on for a few more months. Your exams are coming up in March . . ." They even came to our home and tried to reason with us. After all, Niranjana was their star student who had been making a name for himself and the school. A topper in second grade at the age of five, a topper in third grade at the age of six. Besides being the monitor of his class, Niranjana was an all-rounder who excelled in all

the school activities. His helpful and cooperative attitude had made him the favourite of his teachers. If he were to top fourth grade in the forthcoming exams, the school's reputation would definitely go up a notch. But in the end, the will of destiny prevailed . . .

Sri Swamiji reached Gondia on the 12th at 4 pm with fifteen to twenty devotees and students of the nine-month Teacher Training Course. Niranjana and Dharmashakti had accompanied him from Nandgram. Satyavratji was bringing books and magazines to Nagpur. He would meet us there on the 14th and from there on he would accompany us to Bombay.

The people of Gondia had made all the necessary arrangements for the program. The program began with the secretary of the Sivananda Cultural and Educational Society, Sri Mahadev Dhote, handing over all the documents and keys of the ashram to Sri Swamiji. Sri Swamiji then and there handed over the files, keys and the entire responsibility of the ashram to Swami Yogashakti. In his speech, he outlined his vision for the Sivananda Public School. "I have much to accomplish," he said. "I can't stay in one place, but my disciples will stay here and carry on my work. I expect your full support and cooperation in this regard. With your help, the work of the school and the farm will surely prosper. I will keep visiting from time to time."

Convening a meeting of the ashram managing committee and explaining everything about the relevant forms, pamphlets, rules and regulations of the ashram to the swami in-charge and his four assistant sannyasins, Sri Swamiji left for Nagpur by train on the night of 13th February.

He reached Nagpur on the 14th morning. Programs had been arranged at three or four places in town, and they continued all day long. Sri Swamiji sent us on a sightseeing trip to the local museum and the company gardens. After dinner, he conducted a program in the grounds of the Rama Mandir and thereafter he took a train for Bombay.

The train reached Bombay in the evening of 15th February. We were lodged in a palace-like mansion on the

seashore. The seven-storeyed building had offices and a hotel on the upper floors, while the lower floors were used for meetings, marriages and other such functions. The venue for the Bombay convention was the local racecourse, where a big marquee had been set up.

Many saints and sages graced the convention with their presence. Many national leaders also participated, including the Vice-President Sri V.V. Giri, Sri Morarji Desai and others. A big convention in the financial and industrial capital of India was bound to attract people in large numbers. People were pouring into the convention venue from all parts of the city.

The people of Bombay expressed a desire to have an ashram. Space was acquired at Somaiya Building Trust (Ghatkopar) and on 22nd February 1968, the Governor of Maharashtra, Sri P.V. Cherian, laid the foundation stone for the Bombay School of Yoga. Sri Morarji Desai and Mrs Savita Ben 'Porbander' delivered speeches on the occasion.

On 23rd February, Sri Swamiji went to Porbander for a day. After his return, we all left Bombay on the 24th. Satyavratji returned to Nandgram. Sri Swamiji's party reached Mokama in the afternoon of the 25th. A car and a bus had come to the station to receive us. We finally reached Muzaffarpur at 4 pm. There is a big dharmashala within the premises of the Sati Rani Temple, and our board and lodging arrangements had been made there.

The inauguration of the program in Muzaffarpur was scheduled for the 25th evening itself. A big tent had been erected in the racecourse grounds. Bhajans, kirtans and discourses took place in the evening. The regular program started from 4 am the next morning. The seven-day convention was a big success. Sri Swamiji interacted with the participants and many received mantra diksha as well.

On 3rd March, Sri Swamiji left for Munger by road. Lunch had been arranged en route at Mishraji's farmhouse. After stopping there for lunch and an hour's rest, the group resumed its journey and reached Munger ashram by 3 pm.

The training of the participants of the nine-month Yoga Teacher Training Course had also drawn to a close. In the midst of their demanding sadhana, they had also been taken to the Gondia convention. Their training and sadhana resumed after their return from Gondia. The overseas students were quite happy with the opportunity of touring India and participating in different conventions for almost a month upon completion of their course. They saw, heard and experienced many different things, and they were very pleased with the respect they received as yoga teachers in the different places.

The plans for Sri Swamiji's first world tour have begun to crystallize. He is scheduled to depart on 27th April. Before going abroad, he will visit his guru's ashram and receive his mandate and blessings at his samadhi shrine. Sri Swamiji has decided to celebrate 31st March as 'the day of the descent of yogic consciousness' and then go to Rishikesh on 1st April. He will conduct a World Yoga seminar from 19th to 21st April, in which the Vice-President, Sri V.V. Giri, has kindly consented to come. All arrangements have been made for this program.

A special satsang program was held on 31st March to celebrate the descent of yogic consciousness. On 1st Sri Swamiji left for Delhi, accompanied by fifteen or sixteen devotees from Munger and all the students of the Teacher Training Course. Niranjan and Dharmashakti also went with Swamiji. We reached Delhi on 2nd April, which happened to be the auspicious day of Ramnavami.

Sri Manohar Lal Gupta came to the station to receive us. He had made arrangements for our stay in his house at Kamla Nagar. We stayed there for three days. He showed us all the places of historic and tourist interest. Sri Swamiji went to Trimurti Bhavan, where he met with Smt Indira Gandhi. She had a long and rewarding discussion with Sri Swamiji. He also visited Sri Yashwant Rao Chauhan and they had a fruitful conversation as well. Many programs were also conducted in different parts of Delhi.

Sri Swamiji left for Rishikesh on 5th morning and arrived there by evening. The ashram authorities had already been informed about Sri Swamiji's arrival. Two swamis had come from the ashram to the bus-stand to receive us. We were all taken by bus to Sivananda Ashram. There were seventy or eighty of us in the group and the entire group had been accommodated in the ashram. Swami Satyananda was accorded a special welcome by the ashram inmates. The entire group was taken on a tour of the ashram where they saw the press, Vishwanath temple, the Samadhi shrine, Gurudev's kutir, Annapoorna Bhavan, the akhanda kirtan hall, the hospital and the library. In the evening, bhajan, kirtan and satsang was conducted in the akhanda kirtan hall.

The next day Sri Swamiji said to everyone, "Go sightseeing around town but make sure you return by lunchtime." He told the overseas students where to go and how to get there. There were six or seven Indian ladies in the group as well. He told them, "Dharmashakti has been here many times. She knows her way around the place. Stay with her and see the sights of this place."

We would take a bath in the Ganga in the morning and then visit the Samadhi temple, the press, Gita Bhavan and other nearby places. After lunch, we would go towards Lakshman Jhoola and visit the different temples. We would return in time for dinner, after which we would participate in the evening satsang program. Dharmashakti and Niranjana would sit by the Ganga near Swami Sivananda's kutir for hours at a time. That is where they had the darshan of his jyoti as well.

Sri Swamiji visited the samadhi and kutir of his guru, and then wandered along the banks of the Ganga and amongst the familiar mountains, jungles and streams. He went everywhere and met everyone.

Eventually he received his guru's mandate and blessing. On the third day there was a special satsang program in the evening. Sri Swamiji and his guru bhais spoke on the occasion. Swamiji received a crate each of books and fruits as a present from his guru ashram. Special prasada was

distributed to everyone. On the fourth morning, we left for Delhi and by the next day we reached Munger.

The convocation ceremony for the International Yoga Teacher Training Course was conducted in Munger on the 19th, 20th and 21st of April. After distributing certificates and books to the students, Sri Swamiji spoke about the significance of the occasion. He said, “These ‘yoga babies’ have been nurtured in the womb of this mother-like yoga school for nine months and now the time has come to consecrate them for a great cause – the welfare and wellbeing of humanity. On this auspicious occasion, it is my sincere hope and wish that these Luv-Kush-like children of yoga will prove capable of reining in the wild horse of materialism.”

The saints and mahatmas gathered on the occasion also expressed their views. The students related their own experiences and their sentiments towards the ancient sages of India, who created and perfected the science of yoga in the Himalayan heights, and Mother Ganga, who has literally brought this science down from the snowy Himalayas to the doorstep of suffering humanity. Each one of the students expressed their deepest gratitude towards their beloved Gurudev, Sri Swamiji. The concluding address was delivered by the Chief Minister of Bihar, Sri Bhola Paswan.

On 22nd April, Sri Swamiji bade farewell to all the students of the Teacher Training Course and gave his blessings for their forthcoming task of propagating yoga in their home countries.

People had come from many different places to attend this convocation program. Swami Satyavrat had arrived from Nandgram on the 17th. After the conclusion of the program, the people of Raigarh asked Sri Swamiji for permission to organize the fifth International Yoga Convention in Raigarh.

“Fine,” Sri Swamiji acquiesced. “Begin preparations for the event. You must invite the Shankaracharya of Shardaapeeth as the chief guest. Start sending letters of invitation as soon as possible. Advertise the convention in *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* magazines. I will send Swami Yogeshwarananda from here in



August. She will oversee the entire preparations. Seek advice from Satyavratji whenever the need arises. Forms, pamphlets, books – everything will be printed at our press in Nandgram. Later on, more swamis will come from here to assist with the preparations. I will come there upon my return from the world tour, perhaps two or three days before the start of the convention.”

Swami Satyavrat asked permission to take Niranjan to Nandgram while Sri Swamiji was away on his world tour. The plan was to bring him back for the Guru Poornima celebrations in Munger. Sri Swamiji agreed and we all left for Calcutta on the 24th. On the 25th, Sri Swamiji flew to Bombay, from where his international flight was scheduled to depart on the 26th. Swami Satyavrat, Niranjan and Dharma-shakti left for Nandgram from Calcutta.

### **First world tour**

Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the harbinger of a global yogic renaissance, embarked upon his first world tour from Bombay on 26th April 1968. The Boeing 747 took off for Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) at 11.30 am. The aircraft was painted in a saffron hue and there were replicas of Ajanta murals all over its interior. It appeared as if Sri Swamiji was reclining his head on cushions made of clouds and floating in the silent expanse of an endless sky.

Sri Swamiji reached Kuala Lumpur, which had been the work sphere of his Gurudev, Swami Sivananda, during his days as a doctor on the rubber estates of erstwhile Malaya. At 9 pm, Sri Swamiji’s plane touched down in Singapore. He was immediately surrounded by a crowd of eager reporters. Thereafter he was accorded a civic reception by the citizens of Singapore. On 27th April, he gave a satsang and visited different places and institutions of the city. He was received and welcomed with great warmth at every place he visited. The people of Singapore are well aware of the life and work of Swami Sivananda. The learned and educated class harbours a deep sense of respect for him.

Sri Swamiji left for Hong Kong on 3rd May. At Hong Kong airport he was again mobbed by press reporters, who asked him many questions. From Hong Kong he flew to Sydney where he stayed for seven days. During his stay there he gave as many as sixteen television interviews, besides conducting programs in many different places. From Sydney, he went to Tokyo, then on to Honolulu, and finally reached North America. There he visited Vancouver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and Toronto.

Crossing the Atlantic, Sri Swamiji arrived in Europe. He stayed in London for eleven days, where he conducted programs day and night. He did not have a moment's rest, even his meals seemed like interview sessions. During his stay, he gave a discourse at Westminster Abbey. It was unheard of back then to have an Indian sannyasin, clad in two dhotis, lecturing from the church podium. But such was the force of his personality that his message was readily accepted.

Sri Swamiji sent his greetings for Guru Poornima from France. He conducted programs in Norway, Finland, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Switzerland and Austria. Having ignited the spark of yogic renaissance all over the world during the course of five months, Sri Swamiji returned to India on 17th September.

Reaching Delhi on the 17th, he embarked on a tour of India, staying a day each at Porbander, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Khamgaon, Amravati and Nagpur. He stayed in Gondia and Nandgram for three days each. He also visited Bhilai, Raipur, Bilaspur, Cuttack, Bhubaneshwar and Calcutta for a day each. He was accorded a hero's welcome at all these places.

Swamiji arrived in Munger on 25th October. He stayed there for two days and then left for Raigarh on the 27th with Swami Niranjan. They reached Raigarh on the morning of the 29th. A few other swamis and devotees from Munger arrived in Raigarh on the 30th.

### **Fifth International Yoga Convention, Raigarh**

On the occasion of the fifth International Yoga Convention, the citizens of Raigarh had requested a reprint of Swamiji's entire Hindi literature. Dharmashakti and Swami Satyavrat, accompanied by two servants, arrived in Raigarh on the 29th, carrying all those books.

A galaxy of spiritual and political leaders were attending this convention as well. Jagadguru Abhinav Satchidananda from Dwarkapeeth was the chief guest of the convention. Swami Satchidananda, Sri Swamiji's gurubhai, had come all the way from New York to attend the convention.

The convention was formally inaugurated by the Shankaracharya on 1st November and the proceedings were conducted by Sri Swamiji. Bhajans, kirtans, satsangs and lectures continued throughout the day. The theme of this convention was 'Education and Yoga'. Fifty prominent Indian saints expressed their views over the duration of the convention. Smt Shakuntala Goswami gave beautiful discourses on the *Ramayana* and *Bhagavata*. On the seventh day, Swami Satchidananda from New York formally concluded the convention.

Sri Swamiji left Raigarh the next day along with his devotees and disciples. They reached Calcutta on the 9th and Munger on the 10th. A three-month teacher training course was due to begin on 20th November. Dharmashakti also accompanied Sri Swamiji to Munger to stay there for three months.

### **Expansion of the ashram**

There were not many rooms in the ashram during the early days. As more and more people started coming, shortage of living space became a recurring problem. Yoga Nidra Vihar was built in 1965. In 1966 a big room called Ojhi was constructed next to it to serve as the library. Another room was added next to it, with another 'underground' room below it for Sri Swamiji's sadhana. There was a thatched kutir in front where Sri Swamiji used to give kriya yoga initiations.

Dharmashakti had also received her kriya yoga initiation at that very place in 1965. The thatched hut was made of grass and mud and there was a grapevine hanging around it. She would clean it every day, spreading fresh cow-dung on the floor. It reminded her of the kutirs of sages of yore she had seen in the old pictures. In 1967, a two-room office was built there. While the nine-month Teacher Training Course was on, extra visitors were accommodated in the nearby dharmashala. Sometimes Sri Swamiji would take all the students and stay at Ananda Bhavan.

When many overseas students expressed a keen interest in attending the next teacher training course, with the advice and help of Goenkaji, work commenced on a three-storeyed building. Work started in July and the building was ready by October itself. This building can easily house one hundred and fifty students, two hundred if the need arises and two hundred and fifty during program time.

While Sri Swamiji was touring overseas, people asked him to conduct another teacher training course, and that is where the decision had been taken to start a course from 20th November. One hundred and twenty-five prospective students had already sent in their application forms. Some of the prospective students had already come to attend the Raigarh International Yoga Convention, and after the convention ended they came to Munger with Sri Swamiji.

One hundred and twenty-five students from overseas and twenty-five or thirty Indian students joined the Teacher Training Course that started on 20th November 1968. All the students were accommodated in the new building. During this three-month long English medium course, participants were given instruction and training in many aspects of yoga. At the end of the course they were given their certificates in a special convocation ceremony conducted on 20th February. The students expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Sri Swamiji and made a solemn resolve to spread the message of yoga in their respective home towns.

Sri Swamiji once said:

I do not believe in following an abstract philosophy or system. Man has to search for that ultimate truth, attaining which all unreality and untruth pales into insignificance.

Whatever I do, I do for the fulfilment of Gurudev's vision, not out of any personal desire or ambition. That is why one day I have to bear down scorching rays of anger on someone and another day I have to be like the soothing rays of the moon with someone else. One day I delight in serving another human being and yet the next day if I have to push the buttons of someone to get some work done, I consider myself totally innocent of any wrongdoing.

The tendency to backbite and slander others, commonly seen in women, is something I totally dislike. Guru seva does not mean putting on the appearance of a pious devotee and eating the guru's leftover food on his birth anniversary. To offer completely one's body, mind and soul to the guru constitutes true service to the guru.

The heart of the guru is an ocean of love, mercy and compassion. Even if someone were to commit a million mistakes, the guru would not have the heart to injure the wrongdoer's heart.

### **Activities during 1969**

In February 1969, the Foundation Day of Bihar School of Yoga was celebrated on Basant Panchami. A three-day program of bhajans, kirtans, satsangs and *Ramayana* chanting was conducted on the occasion.

From 1st March 1969, Sri Swamiji began a *madhu sanchay* (honey-gathering) tour of India with seven disciples. Honey is derived from countless, colourful flowers and its qualities and uses are innumerable. It is used for yajna, for making offerings to the Lord, *panchamrit*, mouth-watering delicacies, medicines and tonics and for saving the lives of infants. The honey-bees are truly saints. With their tiny, delicate bodies they suck the nectar from flowers and deposit it in

their honeycombs. Then they are off again on their next round. This is not just their daily routine, but their life-long sadhana.

Each and every flower has a certain amount of nectar. But the flower itself cannot take out and offer that nectar. The honey-bees suck out that nectar and make honey out of it. Likewise our hearts contain nectar, but who knows the art of extracting it? Who wants to sacrifice his life in the quest of providing honey to humanity? What a great and stupendous task! It can only be accomplished by someone who is a fault-free, fearless, tenacious, hardworking and enlightened karma yogi. With this aim and purpose in mind, Sri Swamiji began his All-India Madhu Sanchay tour. His devotees organized two, three and four-day camps at different places.

Sri Swamiji left Munger with seven disciples and after conducting programs in Bhagalpur, Patna, Muzaffarpur, Dhanbad, Calcutta, Kharagpur, Tatanagar, Raigarh, Bilaspur, Sambalpur, Raipur, Gondia, Nandgram, Bhilai, Nagpur, Amravati, Bombay, Poona, Porbander, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Delhi, Bhopal, Sagar, Jabalpur and Gorakhpur, he returned to Munger on 2nd June. This was a historic three-month long tour.

Sri Swamiji's *madhu vidya*, his technique of distributing nectar, is subtle and mysterious yet unsurpassed in its efficacy. Verily he has been distributing nectar since April 1956, the day he left his guru's ashram. He set off with his pot of nectar again on 26th April 1968 when he went on his first world tour. In all the different countries he visited, he freely distributed the nectar of yoga to believers and non-believers alike.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati is a rare personality who believes in doing rather than saying. His life is animated by the twin currents of jnana and karma. The brahma jnana of the *Brahma Sutras* and the selfless karma yoga of the *Bhagavad Gita*, both seem to have blended seamlessly in his lifestyle and outlook. Wisdom in thought and skill in action; the coming together of both is seen only in exceptionally gifted individuals. India has never had a paucity of magnanimous saints and

prodigious scholars. Great sages, saints and luminaries have taken birth in this sacred land. But seldom has such all-round talent been seen in the personality of one saint.

Great changes are taking place in the sannyasa tradition by and by. The habit of running away from one's troubles and embracing sannyasa is coming to an end now. Wisdom and discrimination are dawning in people's minds at a young age; the dormant energy of India is beginning to awaken.

In his Guru Poornima message delivered in July, Sri Swamiji said:

Our history, replete with massacres and bloodbaths, points to the inescapable conclusion that neither our temples, nor the mechanical repetition of stotras, nor even the supernatural forces we worshipped could transform our lives or help us in our hours of crisis. Where was Somnath's so-called miraculous deity when Mohammad Gaznavi plundered and broke it eighteen times? Where was the supposed divinity of Kashi Vishwanath when it was the centre of aggressive wars? Where were the siddhas and yogis when the conflagration of war was burning down the heart of India to ashes?

It was the priests, the credulous masses, the super materialistically deified persons – the forerunners of destiny, yours and mine – who did more harm to us than was done by Nadir Shah and Taimur Lang combined. And if you wish to rise, stand and walk, take it from this sadhu, that nothing but your own relentless efforts will work out your long-cherished plan. No gods or goddesses, no priests or ascetics can help the material prosperity of a nation. Because of our dilapidated spiritual attitude, we have been suffering for ages while the rest of the world has raced ahead in material advancement.

The 'living saints' of every era and nation have served the human cause efficiently. Shankara was the person who changed the integral structure of India. Tulsidas was marvellously successful in bringing about a thorough

revolution in the aspirations and expressions of our countrymen. He undoubtedly eliminated the scourge of ghosts, devils and evil forces from the masses. It was he who discouraged the malpractice of siddhis. It was Ramakrishna who prepared India to fight for her real cause. Today it becomes our duty to pay our due unto them – the champions of the human cause.

Guru Poornima is the day of awakening and arising. At the dawn of this *karma yuga*, the age of ceaseless karma yoga, may we be filled with vitality, may our minds develop a broad and expanded vision, that we may see our own Self, the living God in each and every human being.

### **Sixth International Yoga Convention, Sydney**

The sixth in the series of international yoga conventions was conducted in Sydney from 9th to 16th September at the special request of the Australian devotees. Sri Swamiji left Munger on 5th September. Six hundred and eighty delegates from many different countries participated in the convention, which was conducted by Sri Swamiji himself.

After the convention, Sri Swamiji travelled to New York, Paris and Vienna before returning to Munger on 30th September.

A special shivir was conducted for backward and delinquent children from 1st to 31st October in Munger.

A kriya yoga course was held in Munger from 1st to 7th November, conducted by Sri Swamiji himself. Eighty participants underwent training in the course.

At the special request of Indian aspirants, a three-month sadhana course was conducted in Hindi from 20th November to 20th February. Nearly ninety people participated in the course. People requested that such a course be conducted again in the near future.

### **Activities during 1970**

The Basant Panchami program on 10 February 1970 celebrated the Foundation Day of the ashram. The program included bhajans, kirtans, discourses and satsang.



On 12th February, Swami Satyavrat, Dharmashakti and Kumari Ratna (the younger sister of Dharmashakti) arrived in Munger. They had come to celebrate Swami Niranjan's birthday on 14th February, and planned to stay for a week. Ever since Sri Swamiji arrived in Nandgram in 1956, Ratna had been the chief of his 'monkey-army', comprising the children of Nandgram. Sri Swamiji fondly called her 'Ram-ratan'. In the evening satsang, he introduced Ram-ratan to everyone and reminisced about the incidents of 1956–57. In the end he asked her to say a few words:

Ever since I've come here, I've been thinking of those early days. Now they are but distant memories of my life. In those days, Sri Swamiji moved and played amongst us like a kid. We children reigned supreme during the morning and evening hours. We never allowed Sri Swamiji to interrupt the never-ending chain of stories he told us. As soon as one ended, we asked for another. We were never afraid of Didi's (Dharmashakti) scolding. Rarely would a tired look cross Sri Swamiji's face; he had a boundless capacity for putting up with our tantrums. Undoubtedly we were a bit harsh and cruel on him, oblivious of the greatness of the man and the mission he had in mind. Today it is clear to us that he was not merely our best buddy and playmate, but a towering, universal figure. He has the confident aura of one who is about to usher in a new era. And yet he has the compassion of a sensitive leader. He has created a revolution which is igniting the entire world. It is not an outer revolution, but a silent, inner one, whose demands are much bigger than the petty demands of us children. The world has long been waiting for such a leader.

Sri Swamiji is the inspiration behind a worldwide yoga movement and the personal guide of a big group of talented sannyasins, both Indian and foreign. Tremendous responsibility rests upon his shoulders, keeping him busy throughout the day. He doesn't have the luxury of

looking back at the past chapters of his life, chapters which constitute a glorious childhood for us children, wherein the struggles of our souls lie hidden. Time and again I am tempted to ask him, "Now that you are a titan with limitless potential, do you ever remember those golden moments when we used to enact skits and play games together, when you told us stories like a mother, when you commanded us like a father? We would pout and you would plead. I wish I could relive those golden moments once again!"

Sri Swamiji may be limitless yet he is within the ambit of our spirits. 7th June 1956 is forever etched in my memory because it was the sweetest and most beautiful day of my life. On the morning of 7th June, my curiosity got the better of the doubts nagging my mind, and reaching the Nandgram railway station I was wonderstruck to see a handsome youth, his radiant face framed with curly locks, verily a majestic Greek sculpture come alive. The divinely mysterious smile on his face brought to mind the image of a Tibetan lama whose face, dimly illuminated by the flickering light of a tiny oil lamp in a dark monastery, bears the same inscrutable smile. It felt as if an intimate part of my own spirit that had been long separated had been reunited with me. Mesmerizing us children with his simple, innocent smiles and laughter, he soon became our messiah. We considered him on a par with Sri Rama and Krishna, and this grand edifice of yoga that we see today is all due to the magic of our dearest 'messiah'.

Countless currents of compassion flow out from his being and pour into the afflicted hearts of each and every suffering soul on this earth. The blazing fire of his yoga and tapasya has lit up countless homes. He is like a pure oyster shell, within which has manifested the beautiful pearl Niranjan, his *manas putra*. Though young in years, Niranjan is committed to following the footsteps of his guru and making his dreams come true.

In the strife-filled battlefield called life, ‘Satyam’ is blowing the conch of yoga like Sri Krishna and laying the foundation of a new age and a new culture. His speeches, songs and above all, his yoga movement, is bringing about a great awakening in the hearts of the suffering multitudes.

Everyone in the audience was greatly moved by Kumari Ratna’s words. ‘Dada’, the editor of *Sacchi Baat*, said, “Child, you’ve brought tears to my eyes . . .”

A three-day shivir is being held in Patna from 17th February. After concluding the shivir, Sri Swamiji will return to Munger on the 19th night and then leave for Bilaspur on the 21st. After conducting a three-day program from the 23rd to the 25th, he will return on the 26th. He told Swami Satyavrat, “We’ll all go together. There will be the three of you plus Niranjan will also accompany me. Please arrange five tickets.”

In order to expand the activities of the yoga movement in Munger, Sri Kedarnath Goenka acquired a large house within the Fort area and donated it to Sri Swamiji. In June 1970, Sri Swamiji formally inaugurated this building and named it Sivananda Kutir Yogashram (SKY). Seven and ten-day courses were started in this new building. The one-month and three-month courses continued in the Sivananda Ashram.

### **Seventh International Yoga Convention, Paris**

The seventh International Yoga Convention was organized from 16th to 18th May 1970 in Paris by Swami Devatmananda. Sri Swamiji inaugurated and conducted all the proceedings of the convention. At the Indian embassy in Paris, Sri Swamiji delivered a lecture on ‘The Methods and Techniques of Tantra’, which cleared up many misconceptions that people had about tantra. He also gave illuminating discourses on swara yoga, kundalini yoga and kriya yoga. He returned to India after finalizing the plans to build two new ashrams, one in Paris and the other in Ireland.

Guru Poornima was celebrated on 18th July in Munger in the presence of thousands of devotees from India and abroad. Amidst bhajan and kirtan and mantra chanting, guru pooja was conducted and Sri Swamiji gave initiation to hundreds of aspirants. The evening satsang drew such a crowd from Munger that the audience spilled over from the main gate onto the road outside. They listened spellbound to the bhajans, kirtans and satsang.

Sri Swamiji also inaugurated the International Yoga Library on the occasion. It will be used for the three-year sannyasa training course beginning on 8th September this year. In the near future it will become the largest library of its kind in the world.

On 18th August, Sri Swamiji embarked upon his fourth world tour. In this tour he visited England, Northern Ireland, Denmark, France, Belgium, West Germany, Switzerland and Austria where he conducted yoga seminars, delivered public lectures and initiated aspirants into mantra. The tour was a grand success in all respects and Sri Swamiji returned to Munger on 6th September.

The three-year sannyasa training course commenced on 8th September. The course attracted a large number of applicants out of which one hundred and eight candidates were finally selected for the course.

### **Three-year sannyasa training course**

The training of the one hundred and eight aspirants began on 8th September at 4 am, the auspicious hour of *brahma muhurta*. It was the birth anniversary of Swami Sivananda Saraswati. This sacred land of Bihar is once again resounding with the sacred chants of sannyasins, something that had never been heard or seen since the golden age of Emperor Ashoka.

In the words of Swami Niranjan:

*Swami Sivananda nurtured a hope and a vision,  
And Swami Satyananda brought his dream to fruition.*

*It is India's first and most cherished dream,  
To give to humanity – an evolved, awakened being.*

*Sannyasa is not renunciation,  
But preparation for sacrifice.  
Sacrifice does not mean self-annihilation,  
But life-long service with total dedication.*

*Mere donning of ochre robes does not colour one's mind,  
Shaved head or matted hair do not make one a sannyasin  
either;*

*For those ever-ready to serve, isn't hair-care a needless bother?*

*A sannyasin has but one all-consuming obsession  
Duty – towards his guru and his guru's mission  
Duty to his fellow man and his Maker.*

Sadhana, swadhyaya and seva; no sleep, no rest, no clothes, no food, no gossip. Just a thorough study of the scriptures – the Vedas, the agamas, the nigamas, the Puranas and the darshanas, besides a practical knowledge of human anatomy and physiology. Training will also be given in physical culture, different yoga sadhanas, ashram management, organizational skills, knowledge of international cultures and related subjects. In brief, over the course of the next thirty-six months these sannyasins will be led through a program of training, experience and self-study geared to develop *prajñashakti*, *bhaktibhavana* and *karmashakti*, viz. the faculties of head, heart and hands.

No program was conducted in the ashram for six months because of the sannyasa training course. Neither did Sri Swamiji travel outside the ashram. It was a time of strenuous sadhana and tapasya for all the ashram inmates. The ashram remained closed even for the local devotees of Munger.

The sadhana of the one hundred and eight sannyasa aspirants began on the lines of the ancient gurukuls of the Treta and Dwapara ages. For some time Sri Swamiji stayed in Ananda Bhavan with all the participants, where they

immersed themselves in intense sadhana. In December, Kejriwalji arrived from Dhanbad. He requested Sri Swamiji to stay on in Dhanbad for a month with all his sannyasa course trainees. He would make all the necessary arrangements. There was plenty of space there with many rooms, a farm, a garden, even a swimming pool. His property was at Dhansar, four miles from Dhanbad. The colliery, canteen and offices were also nearby.

“Fine,” said Sri Swamiji, “we will come in January.”

### **Activities during 1971**

Three swamis headed overseas from Munger on 1st January 1971. There was some talk of Swami Niranjana going to Ireland as well. Swami Satyavrat and Dharmashakti arrived in Calcutta on 1st January upon receiving a telegram. Swami Amritananda and Satchidananda left for Belfast on 2nd January. “I will leave for Ireland on 28th February,” said Sri Swamiji. “Niranjana will accompany me. Come with me to Munger now.” Everyone reached Munger on 4th January. It was decided that everyone would go to Dhanbad on 8th January. Swami Satyavrat would leave for Nandgram after staying there for two days; Dharmashakti would stay for a week.

Sri Swamiji gave all the necessary instructions for sadhana to the sannyasa trainees staying on in Munger and then proceeded to Dhanbad with fifty trainees. There they will practise sadhana for a month and teach yoga to the nearby villagers. Then they will proceed to Orissa on foot, teaching *Gita*, *Ramayana* and yoga to the villagers on the way and living on alms. Their destination will be Sambalpur which will be hosting the eighth International Yoga Convention from 3rd April. The sannyasins will be conducting camps and classes at many places in and around Sambalpur in preparation for the convention.

A daily one-hour kirtan session had started in the ashram from 8th September 1970. Sri Swamiji was conducting research on the effects of kirtan on the mind and emotions. There were two or three kirtans which would send all the

swamis into ecstasy from the very beginning. The swamis would start swaying and dancing to the rhythm of the kirtan, many would become unconscious. Many times Sri Swamiji would also go into a trance.

Swami Satyavrat left for Nandgram on 11th January. Dharmashakti followed suit on the 16th. And Sri Swamiji also left Dhanbad in the last week of January and returned to Munger with Swami Niranjan. The rest of the sannyasins continued their sadhana in Dhanbad and stayed there till 10th February.

Sri Swamiji left for Calcutta on 27th February. On 1st March he took off for Ireland with the eleven-year-old Swami Niranjan. Leaving Swami Niranjan at the Belfast ashram, Sri Swamiji conducted several yoga conventions and seminars in many countries of Europe and returned to Munger on 28th March.

### **Eighth International Yoga Convention, Sambalpur**

The entire arrangements for the eighth International Yoga Convention in Sambalpur had been made by the Lions Club. The Orient Paper Mill of Vrajraj Nagar has its head office in Sambalpur. Their office premises were quite spacious, with many offices, residential rooms for visiting clients and businessmen, store rooms, garages and a large courtyard. The huge tent for the convention and all the boarding and lodging arrangements for the delegates had been made within these premises.

Sri Swamiji arrived in Sambalpur on 2nd April. Thousands of delegates had come to attend the convention. There were many overseas delegates as well. The convention was inaugurated by the Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court, Sri Mishraji. The theme of the convention was 'Yoga and Social Service'. All the proceedings were conducted by Sri Swamiji himself. As always, four sessions were held every day. Bhajans, kirtans and discourses by eminent saints and dignitaries were conducted in each session. A special feature of this convention was that the tone and tenor of the discourses was

scientific rather than religious. And instead of being abstract and theoretical, the lectures were practical. The five-day convention ended on the evening of the 7th. On 8th April, Sri Swamiji went to Konark and returned on the 10th. An ashram was coming up in Sambalpur. It was almost ready and the inauguration had been planned for the next month.

On 12th afternoon, Sri Swamiji visited Vrajraj Nagar where he saw the Orient Paper Mill and the Shankha river. After resting and dinner at the company's rest house, Sri Swamiji gave a satsang on the premises of the local Birla temple. After the satsang he left for Raigarh and arrived there at 2 am. He stayed for four days, conducting satsangs and lectures. A meeting was called to discuss the future plans of the Raigarh ashram. Sri Swamiji was planning to return to Munger, but at the special request of Swami Satyavrat he agreed to come to Nandgram. It was Swami Satyavrat's ardent desire to have Sri Swamiji stay in Nandgram with his trainee sannyasins till Guru Poornima. The training of the sannyasins would continue in Nandgram. He had already spoken to the local associates and volunteers in Nandgram and they were fully committed to his plan.

The Nandgram ashram is four kilometres away from the town. Six acres of land had been procured on the G.E. Road, on which a well had been dug and an 80 ft x 30 ft hall constructed. There is a wide veranda on either side of the hall with rooms at the corner of each veranda, making four rooms in total. A store, kitchen and a big dining hall were under construction at the time. Sri Swamiji's room, an extra room in the front and toilets and bathrooms were also being built at the time. There was a big courtyard where a temporary kitchen had been erected for the time being. One of the four corner rooms had been readied for Sri Swamiji in the interim and the remaining three rooms were put to use as a store, office and library. With these arrangements in place, Swami Satyavrat told Sri Swamiji his plans.

"All right," said Swamiji, "I will come to Nandgram with my sannyasins, who will continue their study, meditation and



karma yoga there. We will stay till Guru Poornima, although I will keep coming and going.”

When the people of Raigarh and Bilaspur came to know about these plans, they requested Sri Swamiji to conduct programs in their respective cities as well. After staying in Raigarh for four days, Swamiji came to Bilaspur and conducted a program for four days. Then he conducted a program in Korba as well. Swami Satyavrat returned on the 16th to continue with the preparations in Nandgram. He went to B.N.C. Mills, met Raja Ram Gupta, told him about his plans and asked for lots of bedsheets and durries. Guptaji told him he could take as many as he wanted.

On 20th April, Sri Swamiji sent all the sannyasins to Nandgram with Dharmashakti. He himself went to Sagar with two swamis. He would reach Nandgram on the 23rd.

When Sri Swamiji arrived in Nandgram, the public welcomed him with open arms and affectionate hearts. They supported him fully in all his endeavours. The sannyasins’ training restarted from 1st May. They helped in the ongoing construction work at the ashram as part of their karma yoga. A satsang was organized every evening from 6 to 8 pm in which not only the local townsfolk but people from the nearby villages and towns also participated. Sri Swamiji addressed the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual problems of everyone who sought his help.

Seeing the interest of the public, asana classes were started in the morning. On 29th April, the birth anniversary of Shankaracharya was celebrated in the ashram. Many people from Nandgram and elsewhere attended the program. A few eminent persons spoke on the life and deeds of Shankaracharya. In his speech, Sri Swamiji said, “Jagadguru Shankaracharya stayed clear of all conflict and controversy and organized the sannyasins into a strong and resilient tradition. He emerged as a unifying force for the society of his time, reuniting the fractured sections of society.” Sri Swamiji also shed light on Shankaracharya’s Vedanta philosophy and mentioned the different ashrams he established.

Sri Swamiji performed prana pratishtha of a Devi statue at Surevani village, about forty miles from Nagpur. The accompanying sannyasins conducted akhanda kirtan at the temple.

On 23rd May, Sri Swamiji left for Sambalpur where he inaugurated the Utkal School of Yoga and lit an akhanda flame to mark the occasion. Leaving five swamis to conduct the affairs of the ashram, Sri Swamiji returned to Munger.

Sri Swamiji left for Belfast on 30th May and conducted a yoga seminar there. After visiting many countries in Europe and South America, he returned to India and arrived in Nandgram on 26th June. The training of the sannyasins had continued unabated there.

### **A dream come true**

Dharmashakti was very happy with Sri Swamiji's residency at Nandgram. After explaining the day's work to her press staff, she would go to the ashram where she would help in managing the store and running the kitchen. Visitors would drop in at the ashram throughout the day. She would meet them and tell them about the different activities of the ashram. Whenever Sri Swamiji was out travelling, she would conduct all the ashram activities as per his instructions. If Swami Satyavrat went out of town for construction-related work, she would also go to the post office and deal with the dispatch and receipt of mail and parcels. After finishing all the work at the ashram, she would return home only after attending the evening satsang. Her dream was finally coming true.

She had always seen a beautiful, radiant saint in her dreams. Many a time she had received signs and hints as well. She attributed all this to the fact that she had been studying the *Gita*, *Ramayana* and stories of saints since childhood. Finally on 2nd April 1953 she arrived in Rishikesh, whereupon seeing a young sannyasin standing behind Swami Sivananda, she suddenly realized, "This is the Shankaracharya who keeps visiting me in my dreams!"

On 7th June 1956, Sri Swamiji arrived in Nandgram. As soon as he alighted from the train, he uttered the words, “Mother, I have come . . .” and Dharmashakti thought, “Yes, he is indeed my Adiguru Shankaracharya . . .” A great vacuum in her life was filled, indeed the very direction of her life changed. She learnt, understood and received a lot from him. She travelled with him to many places, conducting camps and shivirs, but the dream still remained a dream.

So much has happened since 1956 – the ashram at Munger, the eternal flame there, the international yoga conventions, the camps and shivirs, the many overseas ashrams, the throngs of national and international yoga aspirants, the nine-month and three-month teacher training courses and finally the three-year sannyasa course in which one hundred and eight aspirants from India and abroad have offered themselves for a grand yajna. The aspirants include men and women of all ages, who are now no longer seen at their physical level but as pure spirits embodied in a human casing. Having seen a different picture from what it had been led to believe regarding saints and sannyasins, the world has now begun to follow Sri Swamiji unquestioningly.

Who could have foreseen in 1956 that the diminutive, boyish sannyasin, who had won the hearts of all with his attractive presence and sweet words, who had played like Kanhaiya amongst children, who had taught the intricate principles of asana, pranayama, *Gita*, *Bhagavata*, Vedas and Upanishads to adults in a clear and lucid manner, would one day unleash a yogic revolution all over the world? But then it shouldn’t come as a surprise since he had become a sannyasin with an iron resolve and the blessings of his guru, Swami Sivananda, to become a *digvijayi*, a world conqueror. Gurudev’s blessings are spreading everywhere like the branches of a banyan tree. Sri Swamiji is committed to the regeneration of yogic culture. What a great contribution he has made towards bringing the ancient sciences to light once again! He is now fully engaged in the laudable task of re-establishing the lost glory of yoga in this modern scientific age.

Sri Swamiji has the knack of leading each and every individual who comes to him for guidance on the path which is most suitable and applicable to him or her. He can identify the nature of someone's suffering and the right remedy for it in one glance. He has the gay abandon of a sannyasin, the radiance of a tapasvi and the one-pointedness of a yogi. The winds of the yoga movement are swirling from their epicentre in Munger and reaching all parts of the globe.

Dharmashakti's dream was finally realized when Sri Swamiji, the moving force behind the yoga movement, arrived in Rajnandgaon with the scorching rays of the afternoon sun on 23rd April 1971. He was accorded a very warm welcome by the locals. Dharmashakti also welcomed him at her own doorstep. Sri Swamiji will be staying here for four months. The training of the sannyasins will also continue here side by side. He will travel for outside programs but always return here. On the auspicious occasion of Guru Poornima he will formally inaugurate the Rajnandgaon yoga school and light the sacred eternal flame.

Nandgram is blessed to be receiving the same teachings and ideals that Lord Buddha preached to thousands of disciples in Vaishali 2,500 years ago. The pages of ancient history are once again fluttering before our very eyes. Ma Ganga is flowing at our very doorstep. And Dharmashakti's dream has finally come true.

### **Inauguration of the Nandgram Yoga School**

All the construction work had been completed when Sri Swamiji finally arrived in Nandgram. The preparations for Guru Poornima were going on in full swing. Volunteers of the International Yoga Fellowship from Gondia, Durg, Bhilai, Raipur, Bilaspur and Raigarh were helping with the preparations. Thousands of people from Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Munger, Nagpur, Jabalpur and nearby villages came to attend the Guru Poornima celebrations. Many saints and sages also came. Kesri Bajpai came with his entire staff from the Raipur All India Radio centre. The

education minister, Bhopal Rao Pawar and other ministers and legislators also attended.

Kirtan started in the ashram at 5 am on the morning of Thursday 8th July 1971. People kept pouring in by the thousands. It seemed as if the entire population of Nandgram was inside the ashram premises. Guru pada pooja started at 6 am and continued till 9 am. Hundreds of people were waiting for mantra diksha. The initiations took place from 9 am to 12 pm. Lunch was served at noon and the program recommenced thereafter. A press conference had been convened from 1 pm to 3 pm in which the press reporters had a chance to personally interview the sannyasa course trainees and other overseas disciples of Sri Swamiji. Kirtan continued without a break for twenty-four hours.

Sri Swamiji lit the eternal flame and concluded the inauguration ceremony of the yoga school. The spiritual light of this flame will dispel the darkness of ignorance not only in Nandgram but the entire world.

After the addresses of saints, scholars, the education minister, legislators and other devotees, the Hindi translation of Sri Swamiji's classic text *Dynamics of Yoga* was distributed as prasad to everyone. The assembled audience then listened intently to Swamiji's discourse on the relevance and necessity of yoga for health and wellbeing:

It is only now that the yogic tradition is being revived after the vedic age. Today young and old alike are developing an interest in yoga. We were ruled by many different races in our recent history, who filled us with a feeling of disdain and disregard for our culture, for our science of yoga and tantra. We started hating our own religion and spirituality. Unfounded and imaginary fears of the harmful effects of yoga were spread by people bent upon rooting out yoga, the bedrock of our entire culture and civilization. Times have changed now. A few years ago Swami Kuvalyananda did meticulous research on the effects of yoga on body and mind. He employed sensitive machines to measure

and quantify these effects, which were subsequently published in the journal *Yoga Mimamsa*.

When I read his research reports, I was greatly inspired. In the beginning, I was a thoroughbred vedantin. ‘I am That, That I am’ – this was the sum and substance of my sadhana. When I read the journal, an inspirational thought struck me, “The lost light of yoga must again be given to India.” Now people are gradually beginning to understand and appreciate yoga, though it is still considered by many to be the exclusive preserve of sannyasins. But I emphatically declare that yoga is more relevant to householders than sannyasins. Householders tend to develop many physical, mental and emotional problems from the struggles of daily life. Therefore, yoga has a big role to play in helping them manage these problems and maintain balance and stability in life. After interacting with thousands of men and women from all walks of life during my years as a mendicant, I realized that Indian society was totally befuddled and directionless. Blind, mechanical adherence to scriptures was leading them astray.

Think logically and carefully. This yoga that I speak of is the very foundation of your life. After all, what is the goal and purpose of life? Unending peace, unalloyed bliss, boundless happiness and total deliverance from pain and suffering – isn’t this what everyone wants? And it is this desire which drives people towards the path of bhoga or the path of yoga. Bhoga alone leads to decay and disease, while yoga alone causes neuroses and complexes. There must be a synthesis, a blending of these two paths. Yoga does not mean running away from life. Rather it involves embracing life more tightly and strongly. To learn how to achieve this, go and stay in an ashram for a few days. It will contribute a lot to your sense of peace and well-being. In earlier days, people went to pilgrimage places to learn asana, pranayama and japa from sadhus and saints. But that is not possible in this modern age. Now you can obtain this benefit in yogashrams.

I keep repeating one and only one thing. The real seed of disease lies not in the body, but in the mind. If the mind is under control, the body will remain healthy even if left uncared for. Different thoughts lead to the secretion of different chemicals in the brain. They also give rise to different kinds of electromagnetic waves. When there is disharmony in these processes, many mental and psychological disorders crop up. So you must learn the art of right thinking, and avoid negative thoughts as far as possible. These days one is faced with a barrage of negative impressions and influences even in the marketplace. Just as dirty surroundings create infection and disease in the body, so do negative thoughts create havoc in the brain and mind.

Many people are plagued by insomnia. They need pills in order to sleep. Instead of treating the root of the tree they are treating its branches. The parasites of negative thoughts and emotions keep eating away the brain and mind. They are ultimately responsible for the cultural decay and decadence we see all around. The negative samskaras multiply in geometric progression just like Raktabija. Just as you vaccinate yourself against smallpox or measles, you must vaccinate the mind as well. You have the vaccine of yoga at your disposal, use it. The more you imbibe the practice, spirit and culture of yoga, the more benefits you will see in your daily life. Better family and social relationships, healthy mind, sublime thoughts – many are the achievements and accomplishments of yoga.

Swami Nityananda would remain clad in only a loin-cloth. He used to say, “Why worry about money? It comes, and then goes the same way it came. If you couldn’t stop its entry, how can you prevent its exit? You must learn to be unattached in life.”

He was the one who gave me the inspiration to start an ashram. Earlier I used to wander here and there all the time. When he made this suggestion, my first question was, “Where will the money come from?” And he replied, “Don’t

worry about money. It comes by itself.” I accepted his suggestion. Now ashrams have come up in Munger, Raigarh and Sambalpur, but I’ve always considered Nandgram as my Sarnath, my headquarters, although the ashram here has just been built. All the rules are turned on their head in Kali yuga. The child is born before the father. The Nandgram ashram is like the father and Munger along with the other ashrams are the children.

In the end, I’ll tell you a succinct method – do japa with a mala and withdraw the mind inside. Gradually, never hurriedly. Concentrate upon the eyebrow-centre and visualize your ishta at that point. In the course of time, you will spontaneously get a decision, a direction from the depths of your unconscious mind, and it will take you straight to your destination. Just remember to be regular in this sadhana, let there be no break in between. Finally my best wishes for this newly-built yogashram. Hari Om.

The public listened in pin-drop silence. Besides the hall, people were packed in the two verandas, courtyard and even on the roof. After his satsang, Sri Swamiji conducted Shanti Path and showered his blessings upon everyone. Smt Shakuntala Goswami discoursed on the *Ramayana* till 10 pm. It was announced then that the first course of the newly inaugurated yoga school would be conducted from 16th July.

The following message of benediction was received from Swami Niranjan in Belfast:

On the auspicious and sacred day of Guru Poornima, you will have communion with a great guru within the premises of the yoga school in Nandgram. The school has just been built but its roots go back a long time. Not only human beings, but even the celestial beings will be celebrating this grand event.

Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, all the others gods, Adiguru Shankaracharya, Swami Vishwananda, Swami Sivananda – they all had gurus and their devotion to the guru was



of the highest calibre. Tulsidas says, “The lotus feet of the guru are worthy of worship and adoration, for he is an ocean of compassion and verily God himself in human form.” He goes on to say, “True wisdom and knowledge can never dawn without a guru.” This points us towards the path we must follow in life. The Upanishads also emphatically declare, *Durlabha sahajaavastha sadgurukarunam veena*, the highest state is impossible to attain without the guru’s grace.

A guru who has realized the highest truth and essence can impart that knowledge to us. This sentiment is echoed in the *Yoga Vasishtha* which says, “The words of the guru will enable a true aspirant to realize the Self, by igniting the flame of wisdom in his heart. Without the aid and support of a guru, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to become established in the state of knowledge. It is only through the guru’s grace that the Absolute Brahman can be realized. The guru alone removes the obstacles from the spiritual path. He alone tears asunder the veil of ignorance.”

Before approaching the guru you must equip yourself with these qualities: guru bhakti, nishkama karma yoga, yamas, niyamas, upasana and the practice of mental truth and brahmacharya. Once you are free from the idea of a limited and distinct being, the guru will instruct in the *mahavakyas*, the great vedic truths. He will remove the doubts and pitfalls from your path. But you must be sincere in your determination and efforts. You must directly perceive the state of sat-chit-ananda through your inner vision. The scriptures enjoin us to practise *shravana* (hearing), *manana* (reflection) and *nididhyasana* (deep meditation). This is the immortal message handed down the ages. This is the message of the *Gita* and the *Ramayana*. This is the message of the sages and saints which has been preserved and passed down through the guru-disciple tradition. These are not my words, but my guru’s. Nay, these are not my guru’s words either, rather

his guru's. This undying message is coming through the immortal lineage of our great gurus. "O man! Everything is within you," exhort the divine energies, "but you are unable to realize it. You need a guru for this purpose, sitting at whose feet you may imbibe the light of true knowledge and spread it around the world."

The company of a sadguru is a matter of great fortune and the citizens of Nandgram, my revered near and dear ones, are acquiring the very same fortune. May everyone receive the blessings of God and Guru in abundance.

There were floods in Munger. The waters of Ma Ganga had entered right into the ashram. Sri Swamiji left for Munger by car on the 10th with the intention of returning soon.

The first course of the yoga school started on 16th July. Sri Swamiji returned on 21st July. On 26th July, kirtan and bhajan started from five in the morning and the entire day was spent in joy and laughter. An uplifting satsang was conducted in the evening. Besides the local devotees, people had also come from Durg, Bhilai, Raipur and Gondia. The program continued till ten at night.

The course ended on 28th July. Sri Swamiji distributed certificates and books to the participants and gave his blessings for a bright future.

Tilak Jayanti was celebrated on 1st August. Lectures and satsangs were delivered on the occasion. On 2nd August, the sannnyasins were sent out to tour the villages on foot and conduct satsangs. Two swamis would go to a village, beg for alms, teach asana and pranayama to the villagers, do karma yoga with them in the afternoon, and conduct satsang on *Gita* and *Ramayana* in the evening. After staying two days in a village they would move on.

Sri Swamiji went to Sambalpur on 9th August 1971. After conducting a three-day program there, he went to Munger.

Swami Sivananda's birth anniversary was celebrated in all the affiliated ashrams and yoga schools. Satsang programs were held on the occasion.

A kriya yoga course was organized at Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, from 15th October to 15th November. The classes were conducted by Sri Swamiji himself.

Soon two courses were conducted in Nandgram yoga school every month. Every now and then, satsang programs were organized as well. Swami Yogeshwarananda was the acharya of the school from July onwards. In December 1971, Sri Swamiji sent Swami Sivaprem to take over the acharya position from Swami Yogeshwarananda.

Swami Atmananda had come to Munger from Belfast on 30th December. She was planning to come and stay in Nandgram for a day, but later her plans changed and she called on the phone asking us to meet her at the railway station. Swami Satyavrat went to the station at 11 o'clock. He had collected books and other things for Swami Niranjan, which he took with him to the station to hand over to Swami Atmananda. He was very happy that day.

### **Swami Satyavratana's demise**

Swami Satyavrat got up at 4 am on 31st December and began his regular routine. He went over the press work and gave instructions for the day's jobs. Then he went outside for a while. A bill had to be received, a receipt had to be given, a quotation had to be submitted to the mill . . . Finishing all these chores he went to the post office. After he had completed his work there, he came over to the press, chit-chatting with acquaintances on the way. He looked at the files and explained the work to the press workers. "There is a lot of pending work today," he remarked at one point, "it must be finished by today." I couldn't help asking, "Why does all the work have to be finished today?" "It's the last day of the year, isn't it?" he replied.

At 11.30 am, Swami Sivaprem came and said, "Dadaji, please come to the ashram. Today you have to do Sri Swamiji's bidding. You have to take the keys from Yogeshwarananda and reorganize the running of the ashram."

"Don't worry," Satyavratji replied, "that task is my responsibility. Let us have lunch first. Then I will come with

you and solve all your problems. I have to finish all pending jobs by today. After all today is the last day. Rest assured, I will finish off everything quickly.”

After lunch, he said to me, “Give me whatever fruits you have.” I had oranges, and he ate them all. I said, ‘I’ll also come with you to the ashram,” to which he replied, “I’m not taking the jeep. Sivaprem has come on a bicycle, so I’ll take the press bicycle. In the meantime, keep the replies to these letters ready. I’ll come back soon. After all we have to give the good news to Sri Swamiji.”

Collecting all the keys, files and registers of the ashram and handing them over to Sivaprem, Satyavratji explained everything about running the ashram, wrote out a letter to the bank that held the ashram’s account, had Sivaprem countersign it and told him the things he had to get done at the bank on 2nd January.

Manibai Shah was a lady from Nagpur who lived in the ashram with her polio-afflicted son, Gunjan. She would always make tea for Satyavratji whenever he came to the ashram. And after serving him the tea, she would always say, “Save some for me as well, Dadaji,” to which he would invariably say, “Give me your glass. I’ll pour you a portion now. I won’t give you my leftovers.” That day as he was about to return after wrapping up all the work at the ashram, Manibai called out to him, “Dadaji, wait! The tea is ready. I’m getting it in a minute.”

“I’m getting late,” Satyavratji replied, “I have to leave quickly.” She had brought the tea by now. He drank half of it and then said, “Manibai, you always asked for my leftovers, didn’t you? Today I’m leaving this as my prasad, something to remember me by. Goodbye Gunjan. Hari Om.”

Swami Satyavratana set forth towards his destination. It was 2 o’clock in the afternoon, the road was deserted. He had barely gone a furlong away from the ashram when he heard the sound of a bus coming from behind. He got off his bicycle and stood by the side of the road to let it pass. The driver lost control of the bus, the bus swerved towards the

edge of the road. Before the driver could regain control, the bus had struck him and moved on . . . He was tossed high into the air with his bicycle and landed fifteen to twenty feet away in the fields . . . There he lay, as if in deep, peaceful sleep, the cycle by his side. No injury, not even a scratch. Such was the will of the Lord . . .

What is destined must come to pass. With his auspicious karmas and the blessings of a great guru, he had lived life fully, and even in death he had emerged the victor.

But the news spread a pall of gloom over the entire town. Thousands of people gathered at the ashram. It was the writ of destiny, no one could avert it. The manager of B.N.C. Mills, Raja Ram Gupta, made a lightning call to Sri Swamiji in Munger. Through the intervention of the local member of parliament, Ram Sahay Pandey, the call went through immediately. Sri Swamiji instructed that bhu samadhi be given within the ashram itself. The citizens of Nandgram did not want to let go of their dear 'Dadaji'. Thousands stayed in the ashram all night long, conducting akhanda kirtan. The next morning hundreds more came from nearby towns and villages on learning about the incident from the newspapers.

At 9 am on 1st January 1972, Swami Satyavratanaanda Saraswati was given samadhi to the chanting of Vedas and singing of Rama naam, in the presence of thousands of people. The good wishes and prayers of thousands have immortalized Swami Satyavrat. Life is evanescent, but the name remains, and his name shall be remembered for generations to come.

Swami Satyavrat had said at 12.30 pm that he had to give some good news to Sri Swamiji on his return. At the right time, Sri Swamiji got the good news as well. But the news of Swami Satyavrat's samadhi saddened people around the globe. Many sent letters of condolence, many came in person. Some people expressed doubts regarding the future of Sri Swamiji's mission in the absence of Satyavratji. Everyone had their own way of thinking but the editor of *Sacchi Baat*, Sri Devendranath Gupta, wrote, "Sannyasins are beyond grief

and sorrow. They are concerned with their duties not the fruits thereof. Even Mother Earth won't be able to discern any difference in the continuation of Sri Swamiji's mission, despite the loss of Sri Swamiji's 'right hand'. Time and tide wait for none, they keep on moving . . ."

And the great soul that he was, Satyavratji had made the following entry in his diary on the morning of 31st December:

Till my last breath, my hands are engaged in the service of the guru, the feeling for my ishta is bright like the full moon, there is no tinge of attachment to anything worldly, and the intellect is keen and discriminative. Whoever dies in such a state of body and mind is sure to merge with the Supreme Self. One must constantly struggle day and night to achieve such a glorious end to one's earthly sojourn. One should not let negative influences fall upon the mind even for an instant, and one should continuously pray to God for the strength to be able to do this. The remembrance of His Name and Form should be done time and again, until it becomes a part and parcel of one's very breath.

Sri Swamiji arrived by car on the evening of 5th January. The next day he was in the press the whole day, consoling everyone, reminding them of their duties at this critical juncture. He inspected all the details regarding the Yoga Vidya press and deputed two swamis to handle its operations. Local devotees kept coming till late into the night. Sri Swamiji stayed there for three days and, after giving instructions about the press and the ashram, returned to Munger by road.

He returned to Nandgram in fifteen days. After overseeing the work, he convened a meeting of the ashram committee in the press itself, gave guidelines and instructions to all the members and returned to Munger three days later.

As he was about to depart, Dharmashakti requested him, “Please take the *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* magazines to Munger along with the press. I can hardly do anything on my own now, let alone managing the press and publishing all these books and magazines.”

“Do you want to live or die?” Sri Swamiji asked sternly. “If you want to live, then instead of drowning yourself in sorrow, drown yourself in some work of great responsibility. You have to live for the sake of Niranjana, to see the great deeds he will accomplish. Understand this point well and make yourself strong and resolute. Dharmashakti, if you have suffered a big loss, so has the world and so have I. In order to fulfil the unfinished tasks of Satyavratji, you have to live like an avadhoota. This is what I expect from you. This is what I command you. I will return in fifteen or twenty days.”

Sri Swamiji came again on 13th February, the holy day of Sivaratri. He stayed for three days. “You have to look after both the ashram and the press,” was his instruction, “and you must visit Raipur every month. Take the task of ordering paper and other press supplies into your hands. You have to do this job from now on. And you also have to attend the meetings I convene in Munger. When I come again on 15th March, we’ll have a meeting here.” So saying, he left for Munger on the 16th.

### **Activities during 1972**

Sri Swamiji arrived in Nandgram on 15th March and convened a meeting on the 16th. He would be completing fifty years of his life on 25th December. Plans were being mooted to celebrate the illustrious half century of the pioneer of the yogic renaissance with a grand Golden Jubilee celebration. Initially the idea was to organize this Golden Jubilee in Nandgram. At the February meeting, Sri Swamiji had suggested that it would be more convenient to conduct the Jubilee in Munger. But all the members wanted the program to be held in Nandgram as it had been the ardent desire of the late Satyavratji.

In the meeting held on 16th March, Sri Swamiji said, “We can conduct the convention here in Nandgram as well. But then all the volunteers from Munger will have to come here and help with the preparations. Many thousands of visitors are expected from India and abroad, a lot of work will have to be done here. Munger has already hosted many programs and conventions of this magnitude. All the necessary resources and facilities are available and ready there. Some preliminary work has already begun on Basant Panchami. Swamis Satchidananda, Maheshwarananda, Vedananda and Agnimitra have already gone abroad to publicize this event. Swami Niranjan is in London these days, where he attends college and also gives yoga programs in schools, colleges and on television. The foreign devotees and disciples give him full support and assistance.” In the light of these facts, the committee members had no choice but to accept Munger as the convention venue.

Sri Swamiji conducted a program in Maheshwari Bhavan on 16th and 17th. He left for Nagpur on the morning of the 18th, accompanied by seven or eight disciples. From 18th to 20th March, he gave discourses on tantra shastra at the Dhanwate Chambers in Nagpur. On the 21st he left for Gondia, where he conducted a day-long satsang program. He left the next morning on an extensive tour, visiting Balaghat, Sivni, Chhindwara, Baitul, Aathner, Itarsi, Khandwa, Indore, Dhar, Ujjain, Bhopal, Panchmarhi, Sagar, Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur, Satna, Rewa, Katni, Jabalpur, Narsinghpur, Mandla, Sihor, Umariya, Shahdol, Amalai, Allahabad, Mirzapur, Varanasi and Gaya. He conducted one-day satsang programs at all these places before returning to Munger from Gaya.

He was travelling by road on this tour. The two ashram vehicles, Pushpaka and Garuda, constituted his entourage. He would conduct programs during the day and then leave at night after the programs concluded. Reaching the next destination in the middle of the night or early next morning, he would again give programs during the day, followed



by travel at night. Only Sri Swamiji could keep up such a punishing schedule! To give programs during the day and travel at night would have proved impossible for anyone else.

As part of the Guru Poornima celebrations held in Munger, satsangs were conducted from 23rd to 25th July and on 26th July Guru Poornima was celebrated. The same day a Progressive Educational Institute was founded in the premises of the kutir ashram in Munger. This institute will look after physically and mentally handicapped children. Child psychologists and other specialists will be working under the guidance of Sri Swamiji to improve the children's quality of life.

A program was conducted in Munger on 8th September to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Sivananda. Sri Swamiji left for Sambalpur shortly thereafter. He arrived there on the evening of the 21st. On the morning of 22nd September, he gave mantra initiation to many aspirants and after giving inspiring satsangs during the day, he left for Bilaspur in the evening. After a busy program that lasted the whole day of the 23rd, he proceeded for Nandgram at night.

He conducted different programs in Nandgram throughout the day and after the evening satsang session he left for Nagpur, where the pattern was repeated. After a packed day-long program in Nagpur, he left for Raipur at 10 pm. His Raipur programs began from early morning itself. After conducting programs at the jail, medical college, Rajkumar College and the Raipur ashram, Sri Swamiji went to the venue of the Raipur yoga shivir. Lighting a lamp and garlanding a picture of Gurudev Swami Sivananda, he inaugurated the yoga shivir. He delivered the opening speech and then leaving behind two swamis to conduct the shivir, he proceeded towards Rourkela at 9 pm.

Travelling by night, conducting programs by day, only Sri Swamiji could practise this difficult 'yoga' . . .

## Golden Jubilee 1973

The dates for the Golden Jubilee had finally been decided – 9th to 15th October 1973. Swami Sivananda had been a doctor in Malaya. In 1923 he left his lucrative profession and, returning to India, he finally arrived in Rishikesh. In May 1923 he received inspiration and initiation from a divine medium. It is a happy coincidence that on 25th December 1973, his dedicated disciple and the founder of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement and the Bihar School of Yoga, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, will be stepping into the fiftieth year of his life. Thus, the Golden Jubilee Convention will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the sannyasa of the guru as well as the birth of the disciple. The printing and posting of forms, pamphlets and cards started on a war footing.

A three-day program was conducted in Munger on the occasion of Basant Panchami. The program provided fresh impetus to the preparations for the Golden Jubilee convention. Many disciples began touring the country and overseas, spreading the message of yoga and extending invitations for the convention.

Sri Swamiji began his international travels with a visit to Australia in March. After inaugurating the Victorian yoga convention, he toured the different states of Australia. He returned on 20th April to attend a meeting of the convention reception committee in Munger. He gave instructions and guidelines for the next phase of preparations and then left for South America. From there he proceeded to Europe in May.

14th July, the ‘nirvana day’ of Swami Sivananda, was celebrated with special joy and enthusiasm. On 8th September, the birth anniversary of Swami Sivananda, a program of bhajans, kirtans and satsang was organized.

Delegates for the convention began arriving in Munger in the beginning of October. By 8th October, more than ten thousand devotees, disciples and delegates had already arrived and more were on their way. Swami Shantananda,

the Jagadguru of Jyotirmath was the chief guest of the convention. Maharshi Mehidas, the tantric scholar Sri Surat Chakravarti, Gayatri Devi, Swami Chidananda from Rishikesh, Avadhoot Swami Karunananda, Mata Sevananda, Sri Shuddhananda Bharti, Sri Viragiji, Sri Manuvarya and Dr Baldev Prasad Mishra from Nandgram also arrived to attend the convention.

Swami Niranjana came from South America with a group of twenty-four devotees. Representatives from twenty countries – yogis, doctors, professors, scientists, artistes and yoga teachers turned up in great numbers for the convention.

The convention began at 5 am on 9th October with a yajna conducted in the ashram. By 8 am the program venue was packed to capacity. The attendants of the Shankaracharya, Swami Shantananda, loudly proclaimed his arrival in the venue. After benedictory vedic chants by his attendants, the Shankaracharya began his opening address. He talked about Swami Sivananda and heaped lavish praise on his life and deeds. He also praised the monumental mission undertaken by Swami Satyananda and gave his best wishes for the success of his endeavours. Thereafter Maharshi Mehidas addressed the gathering. Throughout the day and over the next few days, the assembled saints and mahatmas, including Sri Swamiji, delivered inspiring discourses.

Bhajans and kirtans would start at the venue at 3 am itself. Meditation and kriya yoga classes were conducted from 4 to 6 am. Thereafter from 8 to 11 in the morning, 2 to 4 in the afternoon and 5 to 7 in the evening, the invited dignitaries, including saints, doctors, researchers, educationists and eminent thinkers, gave discourses, demonstrated asanas and conducted discussions on topics useful and relevant to the common man. Sri Swamiji would speak in every session. The stage was always occupied by sages, saints, rishis and maharshis. People would sit on the rooftop of the dharmashala and nearby treetops to listen to the wonderful discourses being given in the convention. Despite the massive crowds, the proceedings of the convention, both on and off

stage, were conducted impeccably, with great decorum and discipline.

On the evening of the 11th, dark clouds began to gather to have darshan of this assemblage of sages and saints as well. They voiced their approval in deep rumbles and sprinkling of water all around. The audience grew anxious at the sight of the swirling black mass above, but Sri Swamiji continued his thundering discourse without skipping a beat: “. . . even the trees, twigs and leaves have come alive in this convention. Everyone must attend these Golden Jubilee celebrations of Gurudev’s renunciation of the world. There is no forgiveness for those who don’t come. You have to come at all costs . . .”

Lord Indra’s dance of destruction began in full swing at midnight. At Sri Swamiji’s instruction, kirtan was started in the ashram as well as all the schools and rest-houses where the delegates and guests were staying. A keen competition ensued the whole night; sometimes the sound of the kirtan gained the upper hand and sometimes the sound of Indra’s wild dance. Indra’s violent thunderstorm was pouring torrents of water upon us while Sri Swamiji was facing it impassively like *Govardhana Giridhari Krishna*.

Gurudev’s decision-making and management skills must be seen to be believed. From 5 am dozens of jeeps began running all over town. The situation was such that with the cyclonic winds and incessant rain, it was impossible to even step out of one’s room onto the veranda. Under such trying conditions, the convention volunteers would load tea and breakfast into jeeps from the ashram kitchen and drive all around town, serving hot breakfast to all the guests and delegates of the convention. At the same time, they kept encouraging everyone to keep the akhanda kirtan going.

While the delegates were engrossed in the bhajan and kirtan, Sri Swamiji was busy negotiating with the divine energies. The entire day of the 12th witnessed the fierce fury of the storm, but towards evening Lord Indra began winding up his operations. It seemed as if he had finally agreed to sign the truce. Twenty hours of rampaging winds and torrential

rain had left the program venue in a shambles. Most of the tubelights and bulbs had been shattered. There was nothing but water everywhere.

The natives of Bihar were of the opinion that storms brought on by easterly winds usually last for days if not weeks, and the chances of the rain stopping are minimal. But by the grace of God, the clouds disappeared during the night. On 13th morning, the task of re-erecting the tents and stage area started on a war footing. Hundreds of people joined in draining the area of water, cleaning up, fixing the wires and putting up the lights. At 9 am the program restarted in the ashram hall with a song eulogizing Sri Swamiji:

*Ujjwal hamsa anek, vimal maanas ke ranjan  
Janmaanas ke paramahamsa, teraa abhinandan.*

Thereafter Swami Chidananda sang a bhajan and delivered a stirring discourse. Then he gave his dear guru bhai a few presents as a token of the good wishes and felicitations of his guru ashram. This was the golden moment of this Golden Jubilee of the guru's tyaga and the disciple's birth. The founder of hundreds of ashrams worldwide, yet remaining unattached in the midst of all this wealth and glory, Swami Satyananda received the gifts from his guru ashram with childlike emotion. Wrapping the shawl around his shoulders, keeping the box of books in front of him and placing the fruits, dried fruits, biscuits and toffees in his lap, he said with a wide, childlike smile on his face, "Now I am rich!"

Then pushing the items to one side, as Sri Swamiji bent to prostrate before his revered guru bhai, the 'revered guru bhai' caught the 'dear guru bhai' midway and locked him in a warm embrace. Their hearts (and eyes) were overflowing with emotion. Everyone watched this rare sight transfixed and my mind travelled back in time . . .

On 23rd May 1957, on the eve of our departure for Gangotri, Swami Sivananda had said in the evening satsang, "Looks like Satyam's pockets are full." To which Swami Satyam had replied, "The pockets of this sannyasin are

empty, Swamiji. Satyam will proceed on his journey only after you have filled his pockets to the brim.”

We are rarely able to understand the true intention behind the apparently chaotic ways of destiny. In this case the true intent behind Indra’s ‘fury’ was to ensure that the felicitation of a ‘dear guru bhair’ by a ‘revered guru bhair’ took place in front of the akhanda jyoti, the symbol of Swami Sivananda, the great ‘father’ of these illustrious ‘sons’, that the blessings of the father may saturate the bodies and minds of both his ‘successors’. It was only to manifest this possibility into reality that Indra had to create all this havoc and fury.

By mid-afternoon, the entire program venue had been resurrected. The ground was still quite wet for which truckloads of hay were brought in and spread all around. Carpets were laid over the hay and the afternoon session was conducted there. The two guru bhais could once again be seen sitting together on the stage. Everyone in the audience sat spellbound, as the two swamis related their ashram experiences filled with mischief, happiness and mutual affection.

“The true nature of man is overshadowed by his animal nature,” said Swami Chidananda, “which is the reason for his many miseries. That life alone is worth living which has the potential to unveil the latent divinity in man. Despite being engrossed in mundane affairs, our real purpose is not just to live and die. We have to move towards the state of eternal joy and bliss. Darkness is nothing but the absence of light. And light is verily truth itself. O man! Wake up, that light is calling you! By forgetting the eternal truth and adopting the path of untruth, you can never achieve lasting bliss. Only the eternal truth can bestow upon you everlasting joy and bliss.”

In this manner, Swami Chidananda distilled the essence of spiritual life and went on to explain the gross, subtle and causal realms, and the demonic and divine energies inherent in each one of us. He also praised the various endeavours of Swami Satyananda and prayed for their success. Conveying his best wishes to the assembled delegates and aspirants from India and abroad as well, Swami Chidananda ended with

Shanti Path, praying for the peace and welfare of the entire world.

In the satsang session on the 14th, before the thirteen-year-old Swami Niranjan began his discourse, Sri Swamiji introduced his youngest disciple to all present and then said, “As far as Niranjan is concerned, I am there for him. But the personal loss that I have suffered can never be repaired.” Sri Swamiji had not forgotten his dear disciple and inseparable associate, Swami Satyavrat. The words of Rabindranath Tagore came to mind: “Beyond the shores of the ocean of life and death, you stand immortal, reminding me of sweet, shared memories . . .”

In the afternoon satsang, the assembled delegates requested an opportunity to publicly felicitate Sri Swamiji. Their request was acceded to and they were allotted an hour for the purpose.

The vast crowd that gathered for the concluding session in the evening had the organizers and volunteers on edge. The marquee, veranda, rooftops, walls, trees and roads were chock-full with people. After the concluding address and Shanti Path, receiving the affectionate blessings of Sri Swamiji, the vast crowd dispersed quickly and peacefully. The anxious volunteers were dumbstruck by this unheard of spectacle!

Thus did the seven-day Golden Jubilee Convention come to a successful conclusion. A highlight of the program was the dugdh abhisheka of the shivalingam in the beautifully decorated Siva temple next door. An exhibition of ashram books and literature, together with a graphic description of each and every aspect of kundalini was also worth seeing. Throughout the seven days, the audience had the good fortune to listen to the most eminent sages and scholars. The bhajan *Brahma murari surarchita lingam* sung by avadhoota Swami Karunananda, the soulful bhajans and kirtans of Smt Amarsangeet, the spellbinding discourses on the *Ramayana* by Smt Krishna Devi – all left an indelible imprint on our minds.

In the words of a press correspondent, Sri Sadhan Chaitanya:

Whenever an auspicious task is undertaken, obstacles invariably arise to test our grit and resolve. I was reminded of Krishna and his cowherd friends who used to play on the banks of the Yamuna. Every now and then their ball would fall into the river, and each time they had to play a cat-and-mouse game with the huge serpent Kaliya to retrieve it. How long would this cat-and-mouse chase continue?

As the heavens opened up during the Golden Jubilee Convention and all the preparations went haywire, I chanced to steal a glance at Sri Swamiji. Our very own Krishna stood serene and unfazed. He was totally undaunted by Indra's ferocious wrath. Rather he was enjoying baiting the serpent. During the downpour, it appeared as if Sri Swamiji was standing on the banks of the Yamuna and challenging Kaliya.

*Come on Kaliya, rear your hoods as much as you can  
That I may jump upon them and dance to my heart's content  
Do not tremble or quake, O many-headed snake,  
That I miss a step and my feet begin to shake  
Do not be misled by my size or appearance,  
This tiny Krishna is bigger than the biggest serpent . . .*

The curtains finally drew on the seven-day celebrations. The convention imparted a new direction and impetus to the yogic renaissance movement. As always, Mr Pai from Bombay filmed the entire proceedings of the convention, and the film was shown in many places in the ensuing Chhattisgarh yoga festival.

The office-bearers and volunteers of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement decided to conduct three-day yoga camps at many places throughout Chhattisgarh. Being the secretary, Dharmashakti was given the responsibility of discussing this proposal with Sri Swamiji and getting his



approval. Sri Swamiji was receptive to the idea and called for a meeting of all concerned people. “Give me your names and the names of your towns in writing,” said Sri Swamiji. “The first program of the series would be held in Nandgram, from December 29th to 31st. There itself I will give out the dates of the succeeding programs. For two months at a stretch, I will conduct programs all over Chhattisgarh.”

Preparations began in full swing for the program in Nandgram. On 28th December 1973, Sri Swamiji arrived by car with three other swamis. Swami Niranjan together with Sanandan and Sanat Kumar, two young boys from South America, were also accompanying Sri Swamiji. Four swamis had already arrived in November to help with the preparations. Besides the local public, more than seven hundred out-of-town delegates participated in the program.

Regular classes started from the morning of the 29th. Four sessions were conducted every day. Satsangs and discourses were delivered by the assembled saints, sages and scholars, including Sri Swamiji and Swami Niranjan. The main theme of the convention was ‘Surat Shabda Yoga’. Smt Amarsangeet’s bhajans and kirtans and the evening discourse on the *Ramayana* by Rajesh Muhammad were the other highlights of the program.

In his satsang delivered on the morning of 31st December, Sri Swamiji said:

Whether we consider 31st December to be the death anniversary of Satyavratji or something else, the fact is that death concerns only the physical body, not the spirit within. The spirit is still present, just as before. The mutual understanding that I shared with him was unparalleled. I haven’t found anyone else who is as much in tune with me as Satyavratji was . . .

Life is evanescent, but this much is certain – that in my life I had the good fortune to behold a human being, from whom I learnt how one may conduct and direct one’s thinking, how one can be a householder and yet

lead an ideal life, and how through his total, unreserved service of the guru, the guru deems him to be his own guru rather than his disciple. I had the highest regard and respect for Swami Satyavrat . . .

Sri Swamiji continued in this vein for almost an hour, paying glowing tributes to the memory of that great soul, recalling heart-warming incidents and finally ending with Shanti Path and two minutes of silence in his memory.

After the evening satsang, he announced that this series of programs would be known as the Chhattisgarh yoga convention. Programs would be conducted all over Chhattisgarh during the months of February and March. He gave out the dates and other relevant details as well. After explaining everything regarding the organization of the forthcoming program series, he left for Munger.

### **Activities during 1974**

On 28th January 1974, the auspicious day of Basant Panchami, Dhanbad School of Yoga was inaugurated at the Bera colliery, Dhansar (four kilometres from Dhanbad). Sri Gopikrishan Kejriwal had donated his residence for this purpose. Sri Swamiji transformed the premises into an ashram, deputed swamis for conducting yoga classes and managing the ashram, and after giving an inspiring satsang returned to Munger. A two-day satsang program was held in Munger as well on the occasion of Basant Panchami.

Two-day programs had been scheduled in twenty towns as part of the Chhattisgarh yoga convention. Sri Swamiji left Munger on 4th February with Swami Niranjan, Sanandan, Sanatkumar and four other swamis. He proceeded to Allahabad first and from there he began conducting programs in Ambikapur, Korba, Janjgir, Bilaspur, Raipur, Bhilai, Mahasamand, Dhamtari, Jagdalpur and finally Nandgram. After a day's rest he headed for Gondia. From there he went to Balaghat, Panchmarhi, Jabalpur, Satna, Bhopal, Sagar and Tikamgarh, before returning to Munger on 30th March.

On 4th April, Sri Swamiji left for South America. After inaugurating a yoga convention there, he returned on 10th April. He arrived in Sambalpur on 12th April, where a yoga convention had been organized from the 13th to the 15th. After inaugurating and conducting the proceedings, he returned to Munger on 16th April.

Guru Poornima was celebrated on 4th July in Munger. A three-day shivir was organized on the occasion.

Swami Niranjan arrived in Colombia to manage the Bogota ashram. Extensive preparations were going on in Bogota for the upcoming Silver Jubilee celebrations there.

Sri Swamiji went to Germany where programs had been organized from 28th September to 18th October. Thereafter he returned to Munger.

A 'Coal-field' Yoga Convention was held in Dhanbad from 1st to 3rd November 1974. The convention was inaugurated by the Shankaracharya of Badrikashram and conducted by Sri Swamiji himself. The program was attended by many saints, scientists, scholars and musicians.

### **Activities during 1975**

Sri Swamiji conducted the bhoomi poojan for the Raipur ashram on Thursday, 30th January 1975.

The Foundation Day of the Munger ashram was celebrated with bhajans, kirtans, satsang and *Ramayana* chanting in February on the auspicious day of Basant Panchami.

A regional yoga conference was organized in Bilaspur from 8th to 11th March. Sri Swamiji inaugurated and conducted the conference.

A yoga program was inaugurated and conducted by Sri Swamiji in Gua from 17th to 25th April.

A one-month children's camp was organized in Nandgram in the month of May. Sri Swamiji arrived on the 14th of May. The children were fortunate to have his darshan and receive his blessings. He stayed in Nandgram for three days during which there was some talk about organizing an international yoga convention in Nandgram.

Sri Swamiji held a meeting in which it was decided to conduct a four-day convention from 7th to 10th November. Swamiji spelled out in great detail the preparations needed for the event. He left four swamis to help with the preparations. More would arrive in September. "I'll take care of inviting the Shankaracharya of Badrikashrama, Swami Shantanandaji," said Sri Swamiji, and giving his final instructions, he left for Jabalpur, where a yoga shivir had been organized.

Sri Swamiji first of all inaugurated the Mahila Yoga Mitra Mandala in Jabalpur. Two days later he inaugurated the yoga shivir and deputing two swamis to conduct the shivir, he returned to Munger.

A three-day sadhana shivir was held in Munger from 23rd to 25th July on the occasion of Guru Poornima. The program included bhajans, kirtans, satsangs and discourses on the *Ramayana* by Smt Krishna Devi.

At 5 am on 26th July, the day of Guru Poornima, Sri Swamiji waved off five disciples on an All-India Tour. These sannyasins will halt every six miles and live on alms to sustain themselves. They will give satsangs, have discussions on *Gita* and *Ramayana*, teach something of use to the villagers and if necessary, they will also do karma yoga with the villagers. They will stay in each village for only one day. In this manner, covering the 77,000 odd villages of India on foot, they will spread the message of yoga to the vast rural population of India.

Swami Niranjan is busy with the preparations of the Silver Jubilee Yoga Convention. He is touring the regional towns of Colombia at present.

Sri Swamiji and Swami Amritananda reached Bogota on 1st October to attend the Silver Jubilee Yoga Convention. After the convention, Sri Swamiji toured Ecuador, Peru, Aruba, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Panama, Venezuela, Argentina, Curacao, Guatemala, Uruguay, El Salvador, Paraguay, Trinidad, Guyana and other island nations nearby. On his way back he stopped over in Barcelona, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Paris before returning to Munger.

## **International Yoga Convention, Nandgram**

Sri Swamiji reached Nandgram on the evening of 5th November 1975. The convention was to begin on the 7th. All the arrangements for the convention had been completed in advance. Delegates began arriving on the 6th. Their lodging had been arranged in four big dharmashalas. Soon the dharmashalas were packed to capacity. Smt Krishna Devi could not attend the convention but Smt Amarsangeet and Sri Rajesh Muhammad made up for her absence.

The guests included Sri Ashok Das, Sri Somnath Kannauj, Swami Ananda Kapila, Kumari Gita Iyengar, Prof Rao, Dr Kendhe, Sri Vishnu Kumar Arya, and representatives of many ashrams and institutes. Over 2,000 delegates arrived from out of town. Swami Shantananda, Shankaracharya of Badrikashram, inaugurated the convention and stayed on for three days. Sri Swamiji conducted the entire proceedings of the convention and inspired everyone with his impassioned satsangs. Everyone was enthralled by the asana demonstrations of Kumari Gita Iyengar, the bhajans of Smt Amarsangeet and the discourses on the *Ramayana* by Rajesh Muhammad. The assembled saints and scholars gave enlightening discourses as well.

Delegates had come from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and overseas. There was a natural affinity with Nandgram in everyone's mind. It was Swami Satyavrat's place, which Swami Satyananda had designated as his Sarnath. Moreover, this town has the distinction of being Swami Niranjan's birthplace. All this had attracted people from far and wide. The four-day program turned out to be a grand success. The souvenir released on the occasion was titled 'Meditation from the Tantras'.

After the convention, Sri Swamiji had planned a fifteen-day meditation course from 11th November. He inaugurated the course on the evening of 10th itself, planted a banyan sapling in the ashram courtyard as a symbol of his blessings and then left for Raigarh by car. There a meeting of the ashram managing committee had been called on the 11th.

Sri Swamiji made some changes in the administration of the ashram, and then returned to Munger.

Sri Swamiji gave satsangs in Bombay from 17th to 19th December. Then he went to Patna for a three-day convention. Four swamis accompanied him on this visit.

### **Activities during 1976**

The thirteenth Foundation Day of the Munger ashram was celebrated from 5th to 7th February. The program included satsangs, bhajans by Sri Ashok Das and discourses on the *Ramayana* by Smt Krishna Devi and Sri Rajesh Muhammad. Many people attended the uplifting and inspiring program.

The team of sannyasins on the All-India Tour has completed a successful tour of the state of Bihar and has now entered the state of Madhya Pradesh.

Sri Swamiji went to Calcutta at the special invitation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and the local television station and gave discourses on 19th and 20th February. The subject was Hatha Yoga and Tantra in the Modern Age. Before coming to Calcutta, Swamiji gave a program in Asansol on the 18th. From Calcutta, he proceeded to Allahabad. There he conducted a program from the 24th to the 26th. He returned to Calcutta and stayed there till 2nd March. Visiting Supaul, Sambalpur and Ramgarh, he reached Nandgram on the 11th, where a week-long program had been arranged. After the program he went to Barhaiya for a two-day program on the 20th and 21st, and then returned to Munger.

Sri Swamiji again visited Nandgram on 13th April and stayed till the 16th. In the mornings he gave diksha and in the evenings, he discoursed on spiritual matters.

On the evening of the 16th, he attended a program at the Bhilai hotel. The program had been organized by the Bhilai Steel Plant yoga centre.

A lino mono composing machine was installed at Ashram Graphics, Munger, to improve the printing and publishing standard. A correspondence course in kriya yoga was started

in January in the form of a monthly magazine, *Kriya*, in Hindi and English. The three-year syllabus will be covered by December, 1976.

Sri Swamiji conducted a kriya yoga course in Tenughat, Hazaribagh, from 1st to 10th May.

A course was organized in Munger for children aged ten to eighteen from 7th to 22nd May. About 150 children attended the course.

The five sannyasins, Swami Vedananda, Swami Agehananda, Swami Shankaracharya, Swami Vidyutananda and Swami Shraddhananda, who began their historic walking tour on 26th July, are now touring the villages of Madhya Pradesh. They met Sri Swamiji in Sarsiba village of Bilaspur district. A satsang program was organized in that village. As per the directive of Sri Swamiji, these sannyasins will participate in the upcoming program at the Raigarh ashram.

Guru Poornima was celebrated on 11th July 1976 in the Madhya Pradesh School of Yoga, Raigarh. Guru pooja was conducted on the 11th followed by a two-day program of bhajan, kirtan and satsang. Sri Swamiji presided over the entire proceedings.

Swami Niranjana, who is currently running the Satyananda ashram in Bogota, conducted successful yoga conventions in Guatemala and San Salvador.

Sri Swamiji was in Ranchi on 25th July to preside over the concluding ceremony of the yoga seminar organized by the Steel Club. Thereafter he visited Calcutta on 5th and 6th August, Kharagpur on 7th, Cuttack on 8th, Vishakhapatnam on 9th and Madras on 10th. He was in Mahabalipuram from 10th to 14th and in Hyderabad from 15th to 16th. Next he visited Nagpur on 17th and Jabalpur on 18th. From Jabalpur he returned to Munger.

An International Yoga Convention was organized in Sydney from 9th to 14th October 1976. Sri Swamiji and Swami Amritananda travelled to Australia to attend the convention.

A national yoga convention was organized in Raipur from 6th to 10th November 1976. The convention was inaugurated

and conducted by Sri Swamiji. The newly constructed Raipur ashram was also formally inaugurated on the occasion. Many speakers had been invited to the convention. After their lectures, the assembled delegates were given an opportunity to ask questions. Smt Krishna Devi captivated the audience with her riveting discourses on the *Ramayana*. Sri Swamiji returned to Munger on the 11th after successfully concluding the convention.

Sri Swamiji inaugurated and conducted a three-day yoga seminar in Bhopal from 1st to 3rd December. The seminar was organized by Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited. The program consisted of informative lectures which were followed by question and answer sessions.

Fourteen years ago, in 1963, Sri Swamiji had given two tiny saplings, called *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* to Satyavratji, who nourished them with his blood and sweat. Today those saplings have become giant trees whose branches have spread all over the world. In her hour of crisis, Dharmashakti had wanted to return these plants to their rightful owner many a time, but Sri Swamiji always replied, "You have to carry forward the work started by Satyavrat. Shed the mantle of a weak, helpless woman. Become like an avadhoota and take up this responsibility with both hands." Gurudev finally accepted these two symbols of everlasting hope, *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya*, back into his fold in January 1977.

By the grace and blessings of God, guru and the late Satyavratji, I was given the strength to take up the responsibilities of the press, ashram, International Yoga Fellowship, magazines, books and many other areas of Gurudev's mission. Now one of these responsibilities is over. A few others remain, which I pray and hope to deliver as soon as possible.

From January 1977, both the magazines *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* will be printed at Ashram Graphics, Munger. As per the instructions of Gurudev, the Hindi books will still be printed at Yoga Vidya Press, Nandgram.



## Activities during 1977

From January, *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* began to be printed and published from Munger.

The fourteenth Foundation Day of Bihar School of Yoga was celebrated from 24th to 26th January. Sri Swamiji inaugurated and conducted the proceedings.

A kriya yoga course had been organized in Tope Chanchi, where all the participants were maintaining mouna as per Sri Swamiji's instructions. He went there at the end of the course to convey his best wishes and blessings to all the participants.

Sri Swamiji constituted a Yoga Research Centre at Bihar School of Yoga on 24th January 1977. This centre will collect and collate information on research and experiments conducted on different aspects of yoga throughout the world. The subjects covered by this research centre will include: kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, prana vidya, yoga nidra, jnana yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, trataka, ajapa japa, swara yoga, nada yoga, hatha yoga, shatkarma, asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, different therapies such as polypathy, homeopathy, osteopathy, chiroprathy, ayurveda, yoga therapy, psychology, latest techniques such as bio-feedback, Kirlian photography, enoplasmic theory, pyramidology and cosmology. Other techniques such as Zen, Catholic meditation, astrology, graphology, phrenology, hypnotism, tantric pooja, chakra vidya, psychic physiology, mantra, yantra and mandala will also be included.

The research committee will work under the guidance of Swami Satyananda. Besides Swami Niranjan and Swami Yogamudrananda, the committee has five Indian and twenty-two overseas doctors as members.

Sri Swamiji reached Kathmandu on 20th February with Swamis Amritananda and Yogamudrananda. He gave lectures at the Lions Club and the Indian embassy. A special satsang program was conducted at the residence of Mr Housner, special representative of UNESCO. These programs had a very positive impact on the people of Nepal. Sri Swamiji returned to India on 25th February.

Swami Niranjan, accompanied by Swami Satyavedananda, completed a successful tour of various places in Tasmania. Besides teaching asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha, Swami Niranjan also gave classes on prana vidya and delivered public lectures on various aspects of yoga.

At the special request of Australian aspirants, Sri Swamiji travelled to Australia along with Swami Amritananda. More than a thousand devotees and aspirants had gathered from Australia, New Zealand and the nearby Pacific islands to participate in a special satsang program organized from 1st to 3rd July at the Satyananda Ashram. After conducting the program, Sri Swamiji returned to India on 7th July, visiting Manila and Hong Kong on the way.

Swami Niranjan returned to Munger after a six-year long stay in Europe, South America and Australia.

Guru Poornima was celebrated at the Raipur ashram. Sri Swamiji attended the three-day celebrations with Swami Niranjan and Swami Amritananda. He had to leave on the second day for some special work in Calcutta.

On 19th August 1977, Sri Swamiji inaugurated the BSY Calcutta ashram on the third floor of the Jamuna Building in Theatre Road.

Sri Swamiji, together with Swami Amritananda, participated in a convention of European yoga teachers in Zinal, Switzerland. The convention, held from 3rd to 6th September, had been organized by the European Union of National Federations of Yoga. Two of Swamiji's guru bhais, Swami Satchidananda from New York and Swami Venkateshananda from Mauritius, also participated in the convention, which attracted aspirants, teachers and devotees from all over the world.

A kriya yoga training course is being organized in Munger from 26th November to 10th December, which will be attended by seventy Australian aspirants and disciples. Dr Karmananda, MBBS (Sydney), has already arrived at BSY, Munger, to contribute to the research program.

Sri Swamiji inaugurated the new premises of the Ladies Yoga Club in Kumardubbi on 17th November. After his

discourse, he proceeded to Calcutta. He stayed at the Calcutta ashram from 18th to 23rd November, giving regular satsangs to local disciples and devotees.

Sri Swamiji visited Medellin, Colombia, from 15th to 17th December and then returned to India via Barcelona.

Many compilations of Sri Swamiji's satsangs have already been published together with books on yogic treatment of many diseases. Other books on yoga therapy written by various doctor sannyasins under the guidance of Sri Swamiji are also being printed.

Reports on the different scientific researches being conducted on yoga since 1977 will soon be presented and published in the ashram magazines.

In January 1978, reports on research conducted on diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, skin diseases, arthritis, yoga nidra, meditation and sirshasana were received from expert doctors and researchers. These detailed reports were published in both the Hindi and English magazines and were soon brought out in book form as well. The research work continues.

### **History of Ganga Darshan**

More than five thousand years ago, during the Mahabharata era, the great yogi and warrior king Karna lived in this region. Though born to Kunti, he was raised by Radha and hence was known as Radheya. He acquired knowledge and skills of warfare under adverse conditions, and circumstances made him the ruler of the kingdom of Anga (modern day Bhagalpur). According to local folklore, the fort area of Munger was one of the royal residences of Karna. Whether he actually lived here or not is a matter for historians to debate and resolve, but as spiritual aspirants it is gratifying for us to think that the great tantric sadhaka Karna lived in these very premises.

Mother Ganga has circumscribed the town of Munger from three sides. Within the town is a hillock covering about twenty-three acres, which is much higher than the rest of the town. Three big gates open out in three different directions.

A moat encircles this hillock on three sides. There is a road in front and a pond on one side. Perhaps there were two ponds earlier, known as Raja and Rani Tal respectively. On top of the hillock stood the historic fort. There were many mansions and buildings nearby. There was a big slab, about two or three feet thick in front of the main mansion, which was known as Karna Chaura. The generous king Karna would distribute fifty kilos of gold to his subjects every day from this very Karna Chaura. The locals sometimes called the entire area on the hillock Karna Chaura.

Mir Qasim was the last ruler of this fort. Thereafter it passed into the hands of the British. Till 1978 the fort was the property of the erstwhile king of Murshidabad, Raja Kamal Ranjan Rai. The buildings in the property lay in ruins and this area had become the favourite haunt of anti-social elements. It seemed as if the spirit of Karna Chaura was ruminating on the memories of its heyday, waiting for a suitable successor to King Karna's legacy who would restore this place to its past glory.

During his wandering days as a parivrajaka, Sri Swamiji had come to Munger in 1956 at the invitation of a local acquaintance, whose residence was close to the fort. In those days Sri Swamiji was not conducting any elaborate programs. Every now and then he would give an evening satsang. The remaining time he would spend upon this desolate hillock. The height and solitude of this place attracted Swamiji in the first place. He would be there at every hour possible, singing bhajans, writing, sometimes doing sadhana. During the summer days, he would stay there till dusk. Sometimes he would sleep there as well. Many times he wondered at the strange fascination that this place exercised over him. "I'm a householder's guest," he would reason to himself. "I have no fixed routine or program at my host's house. Coming here under the free, open sky brings a sense of liberation and freedom." Having been born and brought up in the lap of nature, it was but natural that the stark, beautiful wilderness of Karna Chaura attracted him . . .

After a while, he began to have strange experiences whenever he sat or slept on the slab of Karna Chaura. Sometimes the experiences were pleasant, and sometimes frightening. He wondered whether these experiences were real or mere hallucinations. While in Munger, this place constantly stayed in his mind. When he left Munger, he would forget everything about this place. Not even a stray memory remained in his mind.

One day Sri Swamiji fell asleep on the slab. When he woke up, his body felt languid and lethargic. "It must be early morning by now," he thought, "I fell asleep in the open. Perhaps that is the reason for my lethargy. A bath will solve the problem." But the laziness was so overpowering that he could not get up. When he finally gained the mental and physical strength to get up, he realized that it was 7.30 in the evening.

The next time he lay asleep there, he felt as if the earth beneath him was shaking. "Must be an earthquake," he thought. After all Munger was in a seismically active zone. He stayed where he was, reminding himself that he was out in the open with nothing over his head, so there was nothing to fear . . .

Suddenly Sri Swamiji noticed that the slab had cracked open some fifteen feet away from him. From the crack emerged a tall, bearded man clad in white. His white clothes and beard were billowing in the wind. He looked at Sri Swamiji and then floated away. For an instant Sri Swamiji was seized by fear. But the feeling disappeared as soon as he told him himself there was nothing to fear. He walked over to the place where the slab had fractured. It was a big fissure, below which were the remnants of what looked like a grave. A thought came to his mind, "Maybe that man will return and take me away." He left the place straightaway. He had many such experiences at Karna Chaura, but he would forget them all the minute he left Munger.

Sri Swamiji returned to Munger after a few months. There were only a few acquaintances in town, and so he hardly had any engagements there. He would come to the

hill after dinner and spend some time upon Karna Chaura. Sometimes he would fall asleep as well. Out of curiosity he spent three nights in a row there. On the last night, as he was lying on Karna Chaura in shavasana, he felt as if he was rising upwards. He was rising so fast that his heart began beating wildly. When he finally 'descended', he was drenched in sweat. He tried to regain his composure by successively trying to sleep on his right side, his left side, in shavasana, in makarasana, and finally deep breathing in a supine position. But the feeling of heaviness and rapid heartbeat remained. Suddenly the same man came out of the crack once again and said, "Stay here!"

Sri Swamiji got up quickly and, remembering his ishta, left the place. "This place is not safe," he concluded, and stopped going there. Sri Swamiji had practised tantric sadhanas in a cremation ground at the age of nine. He was fearless in such matters, which is why such experiences had no adverse effect on his psyche.

When he returned to Munger, he stayed in Ananda Bhavan at the invitation of Goenkaji. That place was also endowed with plenty of natural beauty and Sri Swamiji had many experiences there as well. While at Ananda Bhavan, he would totally immerse himself in his sadhana, hardly paying any attention to Karna Chaura. From now on whenever he came to Munger, he stayed at Ananda Bhavan. He would do intense sadhana and occasionally give satsangs. Soon his activities grew and different programs began to be organized. Sri Swamiji's disciples and devotees would come to Munger, stay at Ananda Bhavan and engage themselves in sadhana. They also undertook the translation and compilation of his books.

In 1963, Sri Swamiji had a vision of his guru in Munger, and received a mandate from him which culminated in the inauguration of the Sivananda ashram on 19th January 1964. The eternal flame was lit, regular classes started, programs and conventions were held, people began coming in large numbers from India and abroad. But even in the midst of all this, Sri Swamiji could not forget Karna Chaura. The historic

fort was right in front of his ashram. Next to the road in front of the ashram was the moat and beyond it was the hillock with the ruined mansion on top. It was a centre of attraction for everyone who visited the ashram. They would look at it in wonder and ask Sri Swamiji about it. He would relate its history and sometimes on summer mornings he would take visitors for a walk there.

Sri Devendranath Gupta, the editor of *Sacchi Baat*, became acquainted with Sri Swamiji around this time. He was greatly inspired and influenced by Sri Swamiji, his ashram, books, classes, programs and conventions. He always used to remark that one day Karna Chaura would come into Sri Swamiji's hands and a new chapter would be written in its age-old history. He would relate how the government had planned to build a staff colony on this historic site back in 1950, but public protests forced the government to leave this place for public use.

Many legends and stories have come up about this place. Bhagalpur was known as the kingdom of Anga in ancient days and was ruled by King Karna. This generous king was an ardent devotee of Chandi. In the course of his investigations, Buchanan, a British historian, found that Karna had built the complex of buildings, now known as Karna Chaura, not as a place of residence but for carrying out charitable acts.

During the British era, Mir Qasim occupied this place. He built the mansion and other buildings whose ruins can be seen on Karna Chaura to this day. The buildings from the Mahabharata era have of course long gone. The commanders of the British army and other distinguished visitors used to stay in this mansion. Atop this hill, the British officers were accorded a salute of cannons on important occasions. Later on the British sold this place to the king of Vijaynagaram, who in turn sold it to the king of Murshidabad, Raja Annadarai. His son, Ashutosh Rai, began to live in this place. He would organize musical soirees on the big, wide platform of Karna Chaura. Around that time, people began coming there for leisurely walks, meetings, entertainment and relaxation. After

the abolition of zamindari, Raja Ashutosh Rai and his son Raja Kamala Ranjan Rai began living in Murshidabad.

Subsequently a gun factory was built adjacent to the twenty-three acre hilltop estate of Karna Chaura. The atmosphere of the place began to deteriorate. Countless trees were chopped down, including many rare and exotic trees around the platform. There was a remarkable tree on the east side of the Karna Chaura platform. If one were to even touch one of the branches of the tree, the entire tree would begin to shake and move. The tree was around till two decades back. But over a period of time many of those special trees were hacked down, the platform itself was damaged and anti-social elements took over the old ruins. This decay and decadence in the heart centre of Munger saddened many of the old-timers in the town.

The hillock is surrounded on three sides by a moat. In front of the hillock lies the road leading out of the fort and a big open space or ground. Just below the hill, the gun factory came up on one side of the road and an electrical sub-station on the other. Adjacent to that was the shooting range of the local rifle club. Earlier there were two ponds – Raja taal and Rani taal, now only one remains. Perhaps one was filled in to create the open ground. There were rumours in town that a five-star hotel would be built on the site of the ruins, where drinking and smoking would go on unchecked. The gun shop had already come up, only a wine shop remained, and that deficiency would also be made up soon!

### **Rebirth of Karna Chaura as Ganga Darshan**

The old-timers who knew about the history of Karna Chaura were greatly distressed by this piece of news. They would often remark to each other, “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if Sri Swamiji were to acquire this place and make it into a centre of yoga? After all he has big plans in mind for spreading the science and culture of yoga.” A group of concerned citizens led by Sri Devendranath Gupta met Sri Swamiji in this regard.

“That place definitely has a special place in my heart,” said Sri Swamiji. “If the owner is willing to sell, I’ll definitely



take it. I've great plans for that place – a yoga teaching centre, yoga library, yoga research centre and hospital to name a few. Please make further enquiries in this matter.”

Sri Devendranath approached Raja Kamala Ranjan Rai and discussed the matter with him. He visited the erstwhile king many times, explaining, suggesting, pleading and requesting. Whenever Sri Swamiji visited the Calcutta ashram, Devendranathji would go to Murshidabad and escort Raja saheb to Calcutta where he would arrange a meeting with Sri Swamiji. These discussions continued for a long time. Finally, in January 1978, Raja Kamala Ranjan Rai agreed to sell this historic property to Swami Satyananda Saraswati, who would put it to good use.

Raja Kamala Ranjan Rai had made up his mind to hand over the property to Sri Swamiji, but the deal had to be cleared with the then Congress government. The property tax that had accrued on the land was quite high and the property was currently in the hands of the government, which wanted to sell it to recover its tax dues.

Sri Devendranath Gupta, whom we fondly called Dadaji, took the task upon his shoulders of going to Delhi and meeting the relevant ministers and officials. He had resolved to fulfil this special task that he had set himself upon. He was a lawyer by profession, and later he had started a weekly, *Sacchi Baat*. He was seventy-nine at the time, with shoulder length hair, flowing white beard and always attired in a simple dhoti, kurta and chadar. His appearance reminded one of Rabindranath Tagore. Even in old age, he had tremendous zeal and enthusiasm to successfully execute this mission. He had to travel to Delhi many times, visit various government departments and meet many different officials. There was no dearth of mischief-makers, and many land-sharks were offering higher prices. Dadaji had to face many obstacles and problems in this mission.

Ultimately the writ of destiny prevailed. Smt Indira Gandhi, the incumbent Prime Minister of India, had met Sri Swamiji and read a fair amount of his literature as well. She

was much influenced by his personality and his mission. She lent full support and eventually the property came into the hands of Sri Swamiji.

After confirmation of the sale with Raja Kamala Ranjan Rai, Sri Swamiji visited Karna Chaura with a big group of disciples and devotees. They took a tour of the property and then everyone sat down on the platform of Karna Chaura. While sitting there, Sri Swamiji remarked, "From this very platform, where Karna used to distribute his gold, I will distribute the fruits of yoga."

In the first week of March, the necessary permission was obtained from the Congress Government. All the relevant paperwork was completed and the documents pertaining to ownership acquired. Sri Swamiji sent telegrams to all the ashrams and centres in Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, inviting everyone to Munger. On the morning of 11th March 1978, he took everyone to Karna Chaura for karma yoga. After two hours of strenuous clearing and cleaning, Sri Swamiji told everyone to rest awhile. He himself sat down on a rock, gazing at Mother Ganga in the distance. All of us sat down in a circle around him.

"Do you see how Mother Ganga has turned in a sweeping arc at this place, with the town of Munger perched in the middle like a child sitting in his mother's lap?" remarked Sri Swamiji in an introspective mood. "The beautiful morning and evening riverside vistas with the wide, expansive fields all around are worth seeing. Mother Ganga symbolizes yoga. Her journey from Gangotri down to the ocean represents the journey of the soul from gross to subtle . . ." And he was overcome by a deep, unspoken emotion.

We returned to the ashram at 10 am. After lunch we were told to rest until 1 pm when we would all go back to Ganga Darshan. A few swamis came up with a plan of their own. "We are going to Ganga Darshan right now. We will rest there," they said. Finding a small, flat expanse on top of the hill they dug in four bamboo poles and erected a small raised platform, the way farmers do in their fields. They made it as

comfortable as they could and felt quite pleased with their handiwork, hoping it would be a pleasant surprise for Sri Swamiji as well.

At 1 pm, Sri Swamiji came up to Ganga Darshan with everyone else. “Wow!” he exclaimed, “what a nice platform you have built.” And jumping on top of the platform, he started laughing. Just then it started to rain, and it made Sri Swamiji even happier. All the sannyasins joined in the karma yoga with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

And in this manner did the fortunes of this historic place take a turn for the better. ‘Karna Chaura’ was reborn as ‘Ganga Darshan’. Sri Swamiji’s coming to Munger and the experiences he had here were not ordinary incidents. Their true significance and import will only be revealed in times to come.

Soon construction work at the site started in full swing. The first to come up was the boundary wall, followed by the well at the bottom of the hill. The main platform of Karna Chaura took the shape of a sadhana hall. The platform was not disturbed in any way, walls came up on all four sides of the platform. And then work began on a kutir for Sri Swamiji adjacent to the sadhana hall.

### **Activities during 1978**

Dr Swami Shankardevananda and his associates conducted research in the following areas: diabetes in the light of long-term yoga therapy, heart disease and yoga, the physiological effects of meditation, the utility of bandhas in hypertension, the benefits of yoga nidra, the use of kunjla kriya in the treatment of skin diseases, the effects of sirshasana, and the treatment of arthritis through yoga. The reports on these research activities were serially published in the *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* magazines. Many books were also compiled and published on these subjects.

In February 1978, a three-day program of bhajan, kirtan, satsang and *Ramayana* chanting was organized on the occasion of Basant Panchami.

Sri Swamiji spoke on the management of hypertension through yogic techniques at a symposium organized by the World Health Organization at the Munger branch of the Indian Medical Association on 7th April 1978. On 10th April he gave satsang at Kumardubbi Ladies Yoga Club in Dhanbad. On the 15th, he inaugurated a *Ramayana* program at the Jamalpur railway workshop. He addressed the girls of Baijnath Goenka Girls High School at a cultural program held on the 16th.

Diabetes management courses were conducted from 16th April to 7th May at the Calcutta ashram, and from 1st to 16th May at the Raigarh ashram.

Swami Niranjan conducted a yoga camp in Kharagpur from 22nd to 24th April. Sri Swamiji visited Dhanbad with Swami Amritananda on 28th April.

Thereafter Sri Swamiji travelled to South America. Plans were made to start a press at the ashram there. A Spanish edition of the yoga magazine will soon be published there. Many of Sri Swamiji's books have already been translated and published in Spanish, Dutch and French. Meanwhile work is progressing at a quick pace on Ganga Darshan. The Guru Poornima celebrations this year will be conducted in the new sadhana hall at Ganga Darshan.

On 20th July 1978, Guru Poornima was organized in the newly-built sadhana hall at historic Karna Chaura. A two-day satsang program was conducted on the occasion. Bhajan and kirtan started at 5 am on the 20th, and Guru pada pooja at 6 am. A huge crowd had gathered under an overcast sky. After finishing the pooja and other programs at 10 am, Sri Swamiji instructed everyone to return immediately to Sivananda Ashram as rain was imminent. It was also lunchtime. By the time everyone made their way back to the ashram, it had started raining. It was a sign of auspiciousness. The rain finally stopped at 2 pm. At 3 pm, Sri Swamiji returned to Ganga Darshan with all his sannyasins and thousands of guests and devotees. They cleared away all the accumulated water, spread sand and hay and then placed carpets on top.

For the evening satsang, Ganga Darshan was jam-packed with people, who stretched all the way from the stage to the road. It seemed as if the entire town of Munger had turned up to witness this spectacle. People were everywhere, perched on tree-tops and the rooftops of the nearby ruins.

The program began with a soulful rendering of bhajans by Sri Chandrasekhar Khan. Sri Rajesh Muhammad and Smt Krishna Devi brought the stories of the *Ramayana* to life in their inimitable styles. The program ended with Sri Swamiji's inspiring satsang. Clouds had gathered again, and it had begun to drizzle. "Please leave quickly," said Sri Swamiji to the vast assembly, "it is nearly 8 pm. The time that Lord Indra has graciously allowed us is nearly over." We reached the ashram just as it began to rain heavily. God's lila is unfathomable indeed . . .

In September Sri Swamiji inaugurated the World Yoga Convention organized at Mangrove Mountain by Satyananda Ashram, Australia. The program, conducted from 30th September to 2nd October, was attended by over 12,000 people.

After the convention, Sri Swamiji conducted morning meditation classes at Wagga Wagga College on the 3rd, at Melbourne University on the 4th, and in Hobart, Tasmania, on the 5th and 6th. Thereafter he gave satsang at the Melbourne ashram to devotees and yoga teachers. During this trip Sri Swamiji gave mantra initiation to over 700 aspirants.

On his return trip to India, Sri Swamiji stopped over in Hong Kong on 8th October and gave satsang to devotees and aspirants at the Hindu temple.

Sri Swamiji addressed a meeting in Bokaro on the 1st of November and then proceeded to Jharia with his disciples. There he visited Matri Sadan and gave his blessings and best wishes for the success of the institution.

From 2nd to 5th November, Sri Swamiji inaugurated and conducted the Coalfield International Yoga Convention organized at the Katau Sethia grounds in Dhanbad. More than 10,000 delegates participated in this grand convention.

Many saints and scholars had been invited as the main speakers. Smt Krishna Devi, Sri Rajesh Muhammad and child prodigy Vishnu Arora from Ratlam were also present at the convention.

A special course was conducted at the Sambalpur ashram for asthma patients from 15th to 20th November.

Sri Swamiji conducted a kriya yoga course at the Bogota school of yoga, Colombia, from 17th to 24th November.

In December Sri Swamiji travelled to Thane with Swami Niranjan, Swami Amritananda and other disciples to participate in the All India Yoga Convention organized by the Ghantali Yoga Fellowship. The convention, held from 23rd to 26th December, attracted more than 3,000 delegates. The subject of the convention was 'The Scientific Basis of Yoga and its Practical Application in Managing the Problems faced by Modern Man'. A large number of nationally acclaimed doctors and therapists also attended the convention, and gave lectures on different aspects of yoga therapy.

A special meeting of doctors and yoga researchers was convened on 24th December, where the subject of discussion was 'Acceptance of Yoga in the Present Scientific Age'. Everyone agreed on the urgent need for more scientific research to validate yoga as a scientific discipline.

After the convention, Sri Swamiji stayed in Bombay for a day where he recorded an interview at the Bombay Television Centre. The interview was broadcast on 3rd January.

### **Activities during 1979**

Sri Swamiji gave satsangs in Rajgir and Bihar Sharif from 3rd to 5th January and in Ranchi from 8th to 11th January.

On 9th February he spoke at the concluding ceremony of an eye camp conducted at Jamalpur. He gave satsang at Dashrathpur village on the 11th and at Abhaypur village on the 13th.

Thereafter Sri Swamiji left for Australia. At the Satyananda ashram in Sydney, he gave discourses and initiated many aspirants into mantra and sannyasa.

Upon his return to India, Sri Swamiji went on a nation-wide tour from 1st March to 2nd April. During his tour he visited and gave satsangs in Betul, Khamgaon, Poona, Secunderabad, Nandgram, Sambalpur, Jabalpur, Bombay, Bangalore, Nagpur, Raipur, Raigarh and other places.

Sri Swamiji again travelled to Australia in May where he gave discourses at a seminar organized at the Satyananda Ashram, Mangrove Mountain. On 7th May he gave sannyasa initiation to twenty-five disciples. During his return trip from Australia, he stopped over in Singapore and gave satsang at the new ashram being run by Swami Atmananda. He stayed for a day in Bombay before returning to Munger.

A program had been organized in Patna from 19th to 22nd May. This three-day program was inaugurated by the governor, Krishna Vallabh Singh, who said in his inaugural speech:

Sri Swamiji is constructing a huge yoga ashram in Munger which will help spread the science of yoga not only in India but the entire world. Today over five hundred ashrams and centres are actively propagating Swamiji's message of yoga.

Yoga is the first and foremost tool for spiritual growth and progress which allows us to attain the goal of life easily and quickly. Through yoga we gain both power and peace. To us, Sri Swamiji represents an ideal of strength, intelligence, skill and efficiency. He is verily a pillar of yoga and spirituality.

Sri Swamiji was initiated into sannyasa by his guru in Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, whereupon he gained a wealth of knowledge about the ancient science of yoga. Thereafter he practised intense yoga sadhana for the next twelve years and, with the resolve of making yoga a widespread science for the benefit of all humanity, Sri Swamiji is today engaged in the task of propagating yoga in each and every corner of the world. People throughout the world are being drawn towards the path of yoga in

the hope of physical, mental and spiritual benefit. This subject of yoga is not a new thing for us Indians, but out of sheer neglect and ignorance we have forgotten about it. Today, through the medium of Sri Swamiji, we are trying to remember and regain our lost heritage.

Sri K.B.N. Singh, the former Vice-Chancellor of Bhagalpur University, said:

That very yoga which was getting lost day-by-day, whose fruits we were being deprived of through ignorance and carelessness, is today being revived through the Herculean efforts of Sri Swamiji and being spread all over the world. Today yoga is not merely a means for progress in spiritual life, but a scientifically validated system fully capable of alleviating the physical and mental suffering of the common man enmeshed in the trappings of worldly life. The arrival of His Holiness, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, in Patna today is a matter of great honour for all of us and we are all extremely fortunate to be in his august company. On behalf of the people of Patna, I extend a very warm welcome to Sri Swamiji.

Sri Swamiji visited Danapur on 16th June. He was given a warm welcome at the residence of Lt Col Bisla at the Bihar Regimental Centre. Brigadier Thambu presided over the satsang session that followed. On the morning of 17th June, Sri Swamiji met the Governor of Bihar, Sri K.B.N. Singh and the Chief Minister, Sri Ramsundar Das, at Raj Bhavan, following which a satsang session was convened. In the evening he proceeded to Delhi from where he flew to Colombia. From 21st to 26th June, he conducted a kriya yoga course in Medellin, Colombia. He also inaugurated the newly installed offset press at the Bogota ashram.

Swami Niranjan conducted a program in Greece from 6th to 22nd June. Thereafter a program was held in Switzerland from 24th June to 8th July. On 9th July, he delivered a Guru



Poornima satsang in Barcelona. From Barcelona he travelled to Dublin to prepare for the International Yoga Convention to be held there from 21st to 23rd September.

Sri Swamiji reached Bilaspur on 6th July for the Guru Poornima celebrations. He was accompanied by swamis from the Munger, Sambalpur, Raigarh, Raipur, Nandgram and Betul ashrams. All the arrangements for accommodation and conducting the program had been made in the Najodia dharmashala. A three-day sadhana shivir was held on the eve of Guru Poornima, in which bhajan and kirtan, meditation and satsang were conducted. On the morning of the 9th, bhajans and kirtans started at 5 am. Guru pada pooja started at 6 am. Thousands of people participated in the Guru pooja and hundreds of aspirants received mantra initiation. Prasad distribution and satsang went on late into the evening. After the conclusion of the program, Sri Swamiji left for Gondia.

The people of Gondia celebrated Guru Poornima with Sri Swamiji on the 10th. A special satsang was organized on the occasion. Satsangs and question-answer sessions were held on the 11th and 12th. At the request of his devotees, Sri Swamiji visited many of their homes. Everyone was overjoyed to have received their guru's blessings in this manner. After the evening satsang, Sri Swamiji bade farewell to all and departed for Munger.

Sri Swamiji arrived in Dhanbad on 14th July. A meeting of the ashram committee was held on the 15th. Bhoomi poojan was performed for a new building inside the premises of the Dhanbad ashram and in the evening Sri Swamiji left for Munger.

On 23rd July, Sri Swamiji flew from Calcutta to Singapore where a special event had been organized entitled 'Krishna, our Guide'. All the programs conducted from 24th to 26th July took place in the huge convention hall of the Develop Bank of Singapore. On 26th July a special program was held in which the Bhaskar Academy presented a dance-drama titled 'Usha Kalyanam'. Sri Swamiji returned to Munger via Bangkok on the 30th.

Sri Swamiji toured different ashrams and yoga centres in Europe from 18th to 25th August. He presided over the annual conference of the European Federation of Yoga in Zinal, Switzerland, and the huge International Yoga Convention in Dublin, Ireland.

Sri Swamiji gave satsangs in Chandigarh on 27th and 28th September and in Udaipur from 1st to 3rd October.

A group of Australian aspirants received training in kriya yoga under the guidance and supervision of Sri Swamiji from 19th November to 4th December. Thereafter a similar training course was conducted for Italian aspirants from 5th to 20th December.

Sri Swamiji travelled to Rajgir to conduct a kriya yoga course from 24th to 27th December. The evening satsangs were open to everyone.

A special course was organized for a large group of Colombians who stayed in the ashram from 19th December to 7th January.

### **Activities during 1980**

A big group of Australian devotees arrived on 10th January. Special satsang sessions were organized for them till the 20th. Thereafter a special course was conducted for Spanish aspirants from 21st to 31st January, which was followed by a course from 13th to 20th February for aspirants from Bombay and Czechoslovakia.

A big feast was organized at Ganga Darshan on 22nd January, Basant Panchami, to commemorate the Foundation Day of Bihar School of Yoga. Besides local destitute people, many local townspeople as well as residents of nine or ten surrounding villages attended the feast.

On 23rd January, Sri Swamiji inaugurated the Parvati Laxmi Kanya High School in Jhanjharpur, and in the evening gave satsang at Kameshwar Singh Sanskrit College, Darbhanga.

Sri Swamiji visited Bolangir from 2nd to 4th February to conduct the western Orissa Yoga Convention. On 4th February he formally inaugurated the Bolangir School of Yoga.

Many aspirants received sannyasa initiation in Munger on 14th February, Sivaratri. On 20th February, Sri Swamiji inaugurated a Ramacharitamanas Convention in Bariarpur.

A yoga program was convened in Kahalgaon from 25th to 27th February. Sri Swamiji lit a lamp on the 25th to inaugurate the Kahalgaon yoga centre.

Swami Niranjana conducted two courses at the Satyananda ashram, Paris, between 9th and 24th February.

Sri Swamiji decided to conduct month-long teacher training courses from then on: one in English during March and another in Hindi during June. The March teacher training course attracted seventy participants from all over India. The participants were taught various yoga practices and given practical information on human anatomy and physiology. They also had an opportunity to participate in Sri Swamiji's satsangs and classes taught by medical experts such as Dr Swami Shankardevananda and Dr Swami Karmananda. All the participants received certificates at the end of the course. The June teacher training course was heavily oversubscribed and the advance reservation fees of many applicants had to be returned. Sri Swamiji decided to conduct another teacher training course in July to handle the rush of applicants.

It was decided to have the 1980 Guru Poornima celebrations in Satna. Sri Swamiji would be there from 25th to 27th July.

A special course was conducted for French and Spanish aspirants from 1st to 12th April.

From 29th April to 30th May Sri Swamiji toured the following places in connection with the yoga convention to be held in Bogota, Colombia, in October – Athens, Rome, Frankfurt, Vienna, Zurich, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Paris, Barcelona, London and Belfast. He returned to Delhi on 31st May.

Swami Niranjana conducted television and radio programs for schoolchildren and teachers in Lille, France. He also gave a satsang in this vein in Paris. He conducted yoga camps in Spain and Cadiz, and gave satsangs and discourses in Malaga.

He also gave lectures in Toro Molino, Las Palmas and Tenerife. He is planning to visit America soon. Before touring America, he will visit Munger.

Babubhai Gosai, the secretary of Satyananda Ashram, South Africa, visited India during his world tour. He met Smt Indira Gandhi on 10th February in Delhi and presented her with a set of books published by Bihar School of Yoga. Smt Gandhi praised Sri Swamiji's efforts in the field of yoga and expressed her best wishes for the International Yoga Convention being organized in Johannesburg in October 1980.

Sri Swamiji completed a whirlwind tour of Greece, Italy, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, France, Spain, Mallorca, England, the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland in the month of June. He visited the yoga centres and ashrams being run in those countries and gave public lectures. His itinerary included radio and television programs, meditation and satsang classes, and mantra and sannyasa initiations. "This tour will inspire thousands of people to attend the yoga convention in Bogota," remarked Sri Swamiji. Arrangements had been made with many airlines and hotels to offer discounts to people participating in the upcoming convention. Thereafter Sri Swamiji presided over the Italian yoga conference.

Swami Niranjan has begun his American program with lectures, satsangs and classes.

On 24th July 1980 Sri Swamiji arrived in Satna for the Guru Poornima program and presided over the sadhana shivir convened on 25th and 26th July. The shivir included discourses by eminent saints and scholars from different parts of the country, asana demonstrations and bhajans and kirtans.

Guru pada pooja began at 6 am on the 27th. Thousands of devotees and disciples participated with great joy and devotion. Sri Swamiji gave mantra and upanayana initiations to the accompaniment of bhajans and kirtans. In the evening, he gave an inspiring satsang, and then on the morning of 28th he left for Munger.

A modern offset printing machine has arrived at the Munger ashram. Sri Swamiji's book on tantra, *Tantra Yoga Panorama* has been published in Italian and his celebrated book *Yoga Nidra* in French.

Sri Swamiji conducted an international yoga seminar in Chamarande, France, from 31st August to 6th September. Thereafter he presided over the proceedings of the sixth international yoga week in Zinal, Switzerland. He toured Spain from 15th September to 7th October, visiting Malaga, Toro Molino, Madrid, Casablanca (Morocco), Las Palmas and Tenerife. He arrived in Bogota on 8th October. From 10th to 14th October, he conducted the International Yoga Festival 1980. The festival drew thousands of people from all over the world and turned out to be a grand success.

On 2nd November Sri Swamiji conducted the Munger district yoga convention in Bariarpur.

Swami Niranjan is touring the USA at present as the representative of Bihar School of Yoga and Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He gave lectures and programs at many Lions Clubs and five drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres in northern California. Thereafter he conducted a yoga training session at the San Quentin prison.

Sri Swamiji will leave for Singapore on 6th November where he will inaugurate an ashram. He will then proceed to Australia where a yoga camp, an introductory kriya yoga course, an advanced kriya course, a sadhana course, a teacher training course and an 'open week' will be conducted under his guidance and supervision.

### **In remembrance of Gurudev**

Sri Swamiji said the following words while reminiscing about his beloved Gurudev, Swami Sivananda Saraswati:

Right from ancient ages, the world has been guided by spiritually illumined people who come from time to time to raise man's consciousness and to remind us of the way we must go. Swami Sivananda was one great soul who was

born to give the word of spiritual life to thousands and thousands of people all over the globe. He never came to the West and he never went to the East but today he is everywhere.

I have met most of the many great men who have come in the galaxy of spiritual life in the last thirty to fifty years. I have utmost faith, respect, devotion and acceptance for all of them, for their sterling personalities, but I have met practically no one in my life who has been able to convince my keen intellect. I have always been critical about everything, including myself. But it was Swami Sivananda whose way of life, whose daily routine, external dealings and expression of personal spiritual power were so convincing and impressive that I made him my guru. I am proud, or rather I feel I am very fortunate, to have Swami Sivananda as my guru.

I do not mean to draw a comparison between others and Swami Sivananda, but definitely, when I was young and when I grew up as a sannyasin, I had my own doubts about personalities. If I saw a man who could perform miracles, my intellect used to ask: "What is the necessity?" or "If he can perform this miracle, then why not that one?" and I would create a particular miracle in my mind. If I heard a person talking about the universality of religions and equality of man, my intellect used to put forth the question: "Why don't you practise it?" and I used to think, "What is the use of talking about it? I can also do that." If I came across a great man who had renounced everything and preached detachment, I would look at him and a question would form: "Then why don't you really live it rather than just trying to convince others?"

Like this I went on criticizing throughout my life, right from the age of ten. My intellect was always unconvinced about some point or other. But when I lived with Swamiji, from 1943 to 1956, I was very keen on observing each and every action he performed and each and every thing that he wrote in his books. I found that there was no gap

between his preaching, his practices and his personal life. Therefore, I concluded that when there is absolutely no gap between a man's thought, speech and action, such a person is a *mahatma*, one who has universal consciousness.

The life of Swami Sivananda, as I know it, was the life of a simple innocent child. In fact, he did not have even the trace of the ego of a yogi. When you reach a high point in spiritual evolution, you become a child – not meaning childish, but innocent like a child. Everything in Swami Sivananda was so natural. He did not have to practise it, nor did he need to think about it. It was as though his personality, mind, body and spirit were all emanating a type of fragrance.

There are two types of people – those who express their nature and those who express their intellect. I have seen many people who are very humble, but that is not their nature. They are shrewd people, but they behave humbly with others. I have seen people with charity and compassion, but I can smell that it is not their nature; they have faith in it, so they do it. I have seen people with purity, continence, chastity and generosity, but I definitely know these were not part of their nature; they were expressions of their faith.

You may be compassionate, humble, charitable and pure, but is this what you really are, or is it just the way you have trained yourself to be because you know these are very good qualities? Swami Sivananda was not an artificial good man, he was intrinsically, basically and primarily good because that was the element in him. In my eyes that is the one thing that made Swami Sivananda completely different from all the others I have met in my life.

Swami Sivananda was born on 8th September 1887 in the south of India on the banks of the Tamraparni River. There were prophecies that the next incarnation of divinity would be born on these banks. In his family

about three centuries back, there was another saint who was highly honoured as a great teacher and devotee of Lord Siva. So naturally, Swami Sivananda imbibed all the greatness from his family lineage.

He became a doctor, went to Malaysia and served as a medical man up to 1922. When he realized that man's maladies were deeper in nature, he left the profession, returned to India, and was initiated into sannyasa in 1923. From 1923 he remained in Rishikesh until his death in 1963. He did not mean to develop an ashram, but one grew up around him. He did not intend to make disciples and become a guru, but disciples rallied around him and made him a guru.

The band of disciples grew year by year until finally they had to search for a place where they could all live together. On the site of the present Rishikesh ashram, there was a dilapidated cowshed which Swamiji and his young disciples acquired and occupied. Around this cowshed grew the ashram where the international structure of the Divine Life Society is situated.

I came to Swami Sivananda's ashram on 19th March 1943 in the early morning. When I met Swamiji he was sitting in a small room which was his office. As soon as he saw me, he got up and greeted me with "Om Namo Narayanaya" and bowed down at my feet. I was about nineteen then. He made me sit down and asked me what I had come for. I said that I was searching for something. In the first meeting it was not possible for me to tell him everything. He said that I should stay there, and so I stayed for twelve years.

During these years I lived with a person whose every act was in absolute conformity with what we call God's behaviour, divine enactment. The more I think about it and compare that with my own life, the more I understand what the word perfection really means. I know that all of you will not have the chance to witness an example of perfection unless, of course, somebody else comes



down like him. But surely, in the case of Swami Sivananda, perfection was an absolute expression of the beauty and magnanimity of his personality.

During the years with Swami Sivananda, I did not learn hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, tantra, Upanishads or *Gita*. From dawn to dusk, and sometimes during the night as well, I worked and worked and worked like a donkey because he gave me just one command: "Work hard, then you will be purified. You don't have to bring the light; the light is in you."

It was not intellectually possible for me to understand what he was telling me, but because I had accepted him as my guru, I accepted his commandment. For twelve years, I lived a life above time and space, and worked like one possessed. I did everything from cleaning the toilets to managing the ashram.

The first years of ashram life were so difficult that if I imagine them now, I think it must have all been a dream. I am sure none of my disciples would have been able to survive there as swamis! Along with many of the other young sannyasins, I helped to build the ashram step by step. In those days, we never knew what we were going to eat the next day. Whenever I went to Swamiji, he would say, "You look so lean and thin; you should eat a lot." The only reply I could muster was, "Where from?" Then he would smile and tell me, "No matter, prana is inside you and from it you can get the energy you need." His smiles were wonderful. I think that if a hundred young women laughed I would not be won over, but one of Swami Sivananda's smiles was enough to kill me.

As well as having little to eat, we had no place to sleep, no room, no roof and no blankets. I never saw a mosquito net the whole time I was in the ashram, only masses and masses of huge mosquitoes.

For drinking water we had to descend three hundred steps, and of course we had to ascend them again after we had finished drinking. When I had diarrhoea it was

a great problem. Every session involved a one and a half mile walk. By the time I finished one session and came back I had to go again! Of course there would be no water left in my bucket, and I would have to descend three hundred steps again, get more water and hurry to the jungle.

Once I had jaundice and I never knew it. I was returning from the market one morning when an elderly swami called out, "Hey, you've got jaundice!" I did not know what he meant by jaundice because disease was something I had never experienced before. When I returned to the ashram I asked Swamiji, "What is jaundice?" He said it was some kind of disease in the body. Anyway I forgot about it and nothing happened. Another time I had paratyphoid and being away from the ashram, I had nobody to look after me. I was unable to cook food for myself and I became so hungry that I went to the garden, picked some green papayas and ate them raw. Next day I had cramps in my stomach. Oh my God, I was in so much pain! But this also passed.

During the difficult periods which were ultimately intended for our evolution, we were unconsciously working day and night in constructing rooms, writing books, and printing them. We never knew that we were working. It was a transcendental life and work was relaxation. I can definitely tell you that during those twelve years I did not really have any mental turmoil. Even if there was anything troublesome within me, it never dared to raise its head.

To live with Swami Sivananda was to live with a little baby. In his presence you were never aware of your ego. Hold a little baby in your lap, then you will find out where your ego is. Whatever your age, whether you are a big officer or businessman, the president of a large company, the prime minister of a nation, or even a criminal, how do you behave with a baby on your lap? Differences, formalities, personalities no longer exist. That was the effect of Swami Sivananda's personality, and this is how a saint lives.

It is very difficult to talk of such great men, because what can we say about them? It isn't easy to fathom the spiritual illumination of a person. The mind and logic are finite, but the spiritual attainments are infinite. With the finite scale you cannot fathom the infinity of spiritual life.

Swami Sivananda gave us complete freedom of expression. We had to manage all the ashram affairs from building construction and publishing books, to taking care of the guests or finance. Whatever problem the ashram had or whatever things the ashram needed, we had to manage it ourselves. If we made a mistake, we were not chastised. Swamiji believed that everybody had come to the ashram with a noble intention, and he had complete faith in the sincerity, purpose and intentions of his disciples. Even if Swamiji heard about the swamis fighting amongst themselves, he said, "It's just a momentary diversion, relaxation!"

Many outsiders used to bring complaints to Swamiji about swamis fighting or abusing each other. He said, "They are swamis, sannyasins who have renounced with a purpose and an intention. This is a temporary maya on them. They will be alright soon." That is what kept his disciples around him. It was not Swami Sivananda who created the whole illusion, the whole maya, but his disciples, and he was just the seer of that. He gave us plenty of chances to learn things, and that is why his disciples are doing such marvellous work all over the world today in a very sattwic and humane way. They do not work in a rajasic manner, but in a calm, quiet and simple way.

During my stay with Swami Sivananda, people from different ashrams used to come to me because they knew I was a brilliant Sanskrit scholar. "What does your guru teach you?" they asked. "Nothing," I replied. "He doesn't teach you hatha yoga?" they pursued. "No," I said, "I type his letters." "Does he give you shaktipat?" they inquired further. "I don't know anything about this shaktipat business," came the reply. "Has he given you some siddhis?" they asked. "No," I answered, "nothing."

Frankly speaking what I say in lectures, what I have written in books, the hatha yoga I teach, etc., has not come from studies or teachings. I have not read books about all these things, but they are very clear to me, and definitely I am an authority on hatha yoga, tantra and kundalini. You see, the knowledge does not come from outside; it is an unfoldment of what is already within. That which is in me is also in you. The only difference is that I had one watchword in life – service to guru, without any motive, without expectation. This was my passion, my joy and my pleasure.

Once a very powerful political leader came to the ashram. He told me, “Look here my boy, you are wasting your time in this place. You are so brilliant and such a fine orator, you could influence the whole country. Come with me and I’ll tell you what to do.” I kept quiet and thought, “This is a test my guru has sent to me.” That was the greatest temptation because that politician wanted to make me president of a big federation, a leader of thousands of powerful people, but I did not accept that offer. I remembered what Swamiji had told me, “Work hard and purify yourself, then the light will unfold from within”. And I felt sure it would come true.

I have heard many mythological stories about great men of charity, but I have never seen one except for Swami Sivananda. Nobody went away without taking something. If one asked for money, clothes, blankets, food, shelter, medicine, love, affection, recognition, certificates, recommendation letters, anything one wanted one received. That was the greatness of Swamiji’s heart. It was not that he was rich, in fact, for many years, the ashram was very heavily in debt.

If anyone told Swamiji about the ashram’s financial situation he would say, “It is not me; it is God who gives.” If something was not available in the ashram, we had to bring it from Rishikesh market. If it was unavailable there, it would be brought from Dehra Dun (twenty-six miles away) or from Delhi.

Swamiji's generosity was one of the greatest problems for the institution. His behaviour, attitude and personality became a very big liability, so much so that the moment money was received through the Post Office, it was immediately distributed to different people, leaving nothing in the balance. Then, every time Swamiji asked about money, we would tell him there was none. When he realized what we were doing, he began to directly give away the money that was placed at his feet.

Not everyone in Swami Sivananda's ashram spoke well about him; some criticized him day in and day out. Some people even came to the ashram to ridicule and mock not only Swamiji but everything that concerned him. Swami Sivananda knew this very well. When it was brought to his notice, the only thing he said was: "God's creation is beautiful, and we all have to be different from each other. If there is no resistance or criticism, the evolution of man will come to a dead end. If you think, wish or believe that everybody should accept you, your advice, philosophy, way of life, and agree with you totally, then you are hoping for a world which can never be.

"The world is a mixture of the three gunas. As such, you will always find people representing different compositions of these three qualities. If everybody in your institution was like you, it would be like an organ or harmonium with only one note, not seven. In music, as in life, each note is entirely different from the others. If you don't know how to combine these notes when you play the harmonium, you will only produce a lot of noise and disturbance. But if you can combine the notes well, you will be able to create beautiful music out of different sounds. In the same way scandal-mongers, tale-carriers, backbiters and other such people should exist and they always will, so you have to learn to live with them and not let them disturb you."

This is a very difficult philosophy to live by, but it is inevitable that you do. If you cannot live with different types

of people in society, in your family, in an institution, then you are doomed to miseries, frustrations and all kinds of mental problems. You know it very well.

When people came to him with their troubles, Swamiji's attitude was so natural and free from vanity, show and egoism, I have never seen anyone else like this. Many people who have siddhis make a show and give a type of stage performance, or they give themselves credit, but he never did this. Whenever people came to him with a problem, he always said, "I will pray for you", or "You should practise this mantra and meditation", or "God is very kind and He will listen to your prayers. You will be all right."

If anyone told Swamiji they had been helped by his spiritual power, he would immediately reject it. He would say, "No, God is great, He has done it. I've only helped Him." Many people have marketed their spiritual power or they have cashed it in for political influence or for obtaining disciples. This is still being done in the world today and it has been happening throughout the ages. But Swamiji was never a part of this.

According to Swamiji, spiritual power which comes to you by dint of sadhana is an expression of God's wish. Therefore, you are only an agent, an instrument. That much credit can go to you. You are the tool, but you are not the maker of miracles. You are not the healer, you are not the prophet, it is He. This is the greatest self-control a sadhu, a sannyasin or a saint must have.

Once a scorpion stung me twice on the toe and it was a very horrible experience. I was actually crying like a child, not from fear, because I do not know fear, but on account of the unbearable pain. It was so great that I wanted to cut off my toe, but before I could do it, I met Swamiji. He asked, "What happened to you?" I said, "Scorpion." "Let me see," he demanded, and when he touched it, I was all right. Then I asked, "How did you do that?" His reply was, "Oh I happened to remember the right mantra for

it.” I knew he was not reciting mantras, but he would not take the credit upon himself.

On 13th July 1963, I was in Munger, and that night when I was sleeping, I had a very clear vision. I saw Swamiji travelling across the Ganga in Rishikesh on a very big ship. I was standing on the bank of the river while the ship was moving towards the opposite side. The dream was over and I knew that Swamiji had left his body. The physical body of guru leaves at any moment, it is inevitable, but his spirit remains forever if the disciple can remain in tune with him. Then he guides him at all times, in dream, in thought and emotion, and in actual life.

### **Activities during 1981**

On 3rd January 1981, the Premchand birth centenary celebrations were organized at the Sri Krishna Seva Sadan, Munger. Sri Swamiji presided over the event.

The construction activities were fully underway at Ganga Darshan. The sadhana hall was ready. The monthly teacher training and health management courses were conducted in that hall itself. The Well House was also ready, and so was the kutir. Work had started on another floor above it. The Yoga Arogya building was also nearly finished. The next construction project was Annapoorna Bhavan. The ground floor would house the kitchen and four big halls with long verandas on both sides. The upper floor would have thirty-five to forty residential rooms. Students had already started living in the Ganga Darshan complex. At mealtimes, they would all go to Sivananda Ashram and then come back.

The auspicious day of Basant Panchami was celebrated on 9th February in the presence of Sri Swamiji. A program of havan, bhajan, kirtan and satsang was organized at Ganga Darshan, following which the newly built Yoga Arogya building was formally inaugurated.

On 15th February, Sri Swamiji presented certificates to students of RD & DJ College, Munger, who had participated

in the National Service Scheme. He shed light on the significance and importance of yoga in student life. In the evening, Sri Swamiji gave a discourse at a satsang meeting organized by the villagers of Fulka, a village near Jamalpur.

Sri Swamiji inaugurated a *Ramayana* program at Rampur colony, Jamalpur, on 16th February.

From 27th February to 1st March, Sri Swamiji participated in a satsang conference organized under the auspices of the All India Gita Sammelan, at the Sanatan Dharma Mandir, New Delhi. Thereafter he conducted the Yoga Silver Jubilee Convention, Bhilai, organized by the Bhilai Steel Plant Yoga Niketan. Four sessions were held daily in the three-day event and Sri Swamiji was present at every session.

Thereafter Sri Swamiji proceeded to Raigarh, where he addressed a meeting of the members of the JC's club on 10th March.

From Raigarh Sri Swamiji returned to Munger. A two-month sannyasa course had been organized in Munger during March-April for those aspirants who wanted to become acquainted with different facets of sannyasa life before taking sannyasa. The participants of the course lived like sannyasins for two months.

Sri Swamiji travelled to Europe in April. He conducted a Tantra Yoga Meditation course organized by Swami Om Murti from 2nd to 4th April in Milan, Italy. Then he conducted a yoga convention in Greece, organized by Swami Sivamurti, from 7th to 9th April. Thereafter, on 11th and 12th April, he conducted a program organized by Swami Anandananda in Torino, Italy.

During 1980, Hindi-medium teacher training courses were conducted in March, June, July and August and an English-medium course for Indian nationals during October. In November, a kriya yoga course was organized in Hindi and English. In November, December and January 1981, yoga courses were conducted for overseas aspirants.

Sri Swamiji kicked off a week-long yoga training course at Bhagalpur Engineering College on 19th April. Thereafter

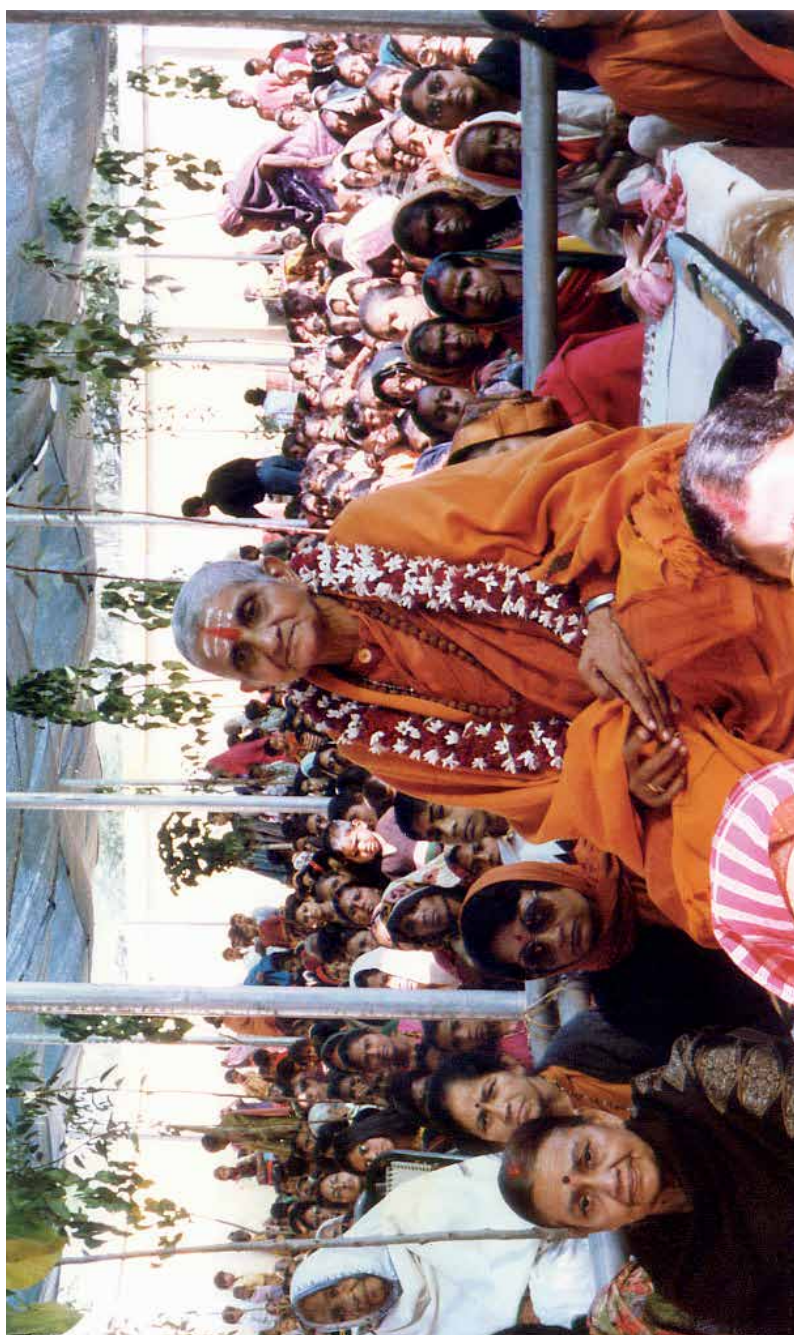








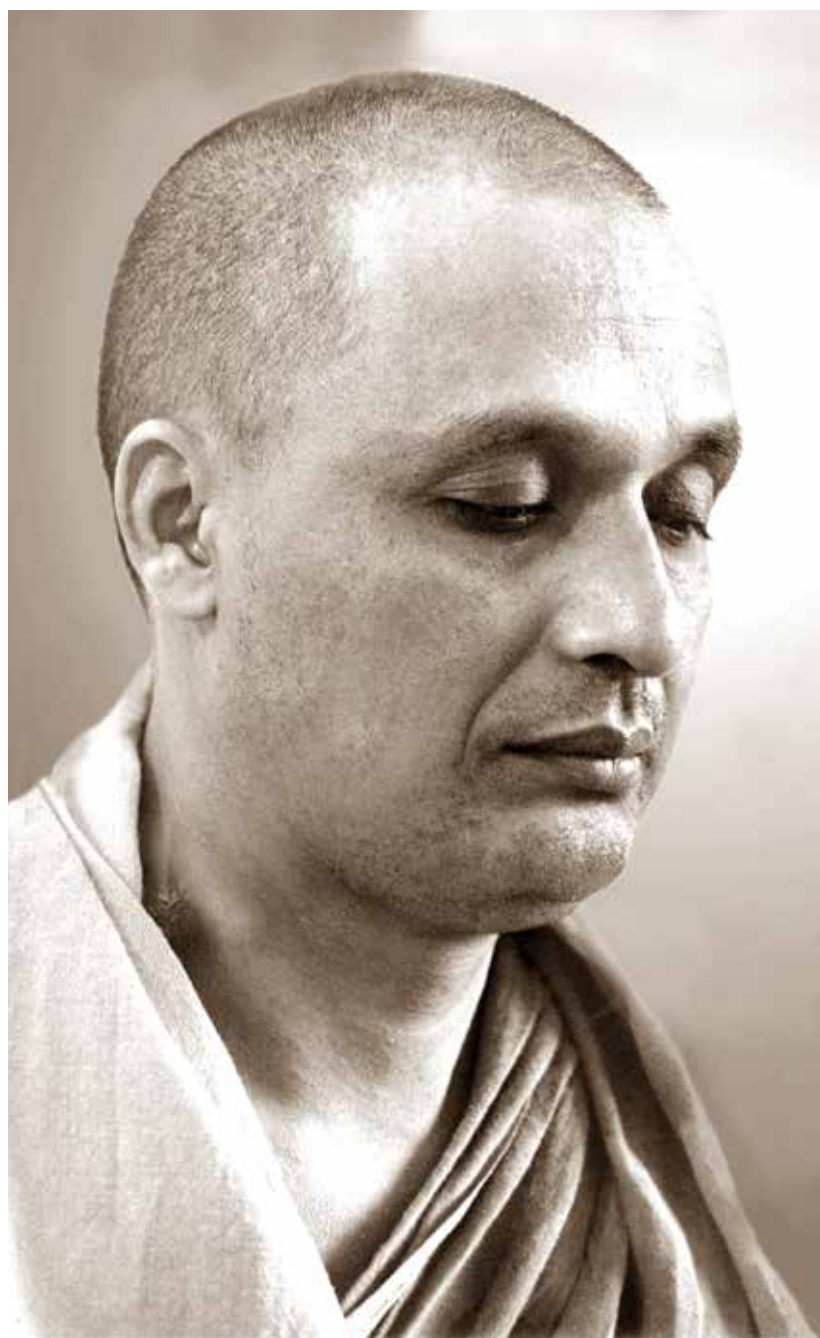
















he delivered a lecture at a program organized by the Sabaur Yoga Mitra Mandal at the Bihar Agricultural College.

Swami Niranjan toured the entire length and breadth of the United States of America, spreading the message of yoga to American citizens. His program included weekly and weekend courses in New York; weekend classes in Elizabeth, New Jersey; lectures at different drug rehabilitation centres in and around San Francisco; discourses at thirty Lions Clubs throughout northern California; yoga classes in Downey and Anaheim; a visit to the Self-Realization Fellowship headquarters in Los Angeles; lectures in Yucca Valley, California; a tour of yoga centres in Salt Lake City, Utah; lectures in Chicago, Madison county and Morton, Illinois; interviews in Woodstock and Rochester, New York, and a teacher training course in San Francisco.

Swami Niranjan began his second road tour of American states in January 1981. He was accompanied on this trip by Swami Prashantananda and Anjali Mata (a disciple of Swami Rammurti). His itinerary included programs in the following places: Los Angeles, Yucca Valley, San Francisco, Anis, Benson, Deming, Albuquerque, Oklahoma City, St Louis and Chicago.

After conducting these programs, Swami Niranjan will stay in Rochester, New York, where he will run an ashram and conduct lectures and classes.

On the evening of 17th May, Sri Swamiji inaugurated the ninety-eighth birthday celebrations of Maharshi Mehidasji Maharaj in Munger. The program was organized by Sant Mat Satsang Ashram. On 12th June, he laid the foundation stone for the Institute of Tantra, Yoga and Astrology. Parliamentarian Sri Chandrashekhar Singh was the chief guest on the occasion.

It was decided to celebrate Guru Poornima in Jabalpur that year. The Mahila Yoga Mandal of Jabalpur volunteered to host the event. Yoga practitioners from Switzerland, Colombia, Brazil and Italy had come to Munger to attend a special yoga sadhana course from 6th to 13th July. After the

course all the participants travelled to Jabalpur. The Nainani family had also come from Barcelona to participate in the program.

Sri Swamiji reached Jabalpur on the 14th. Devotees and disciples, acquaintances and non-acquaintances had arrived from all parts of the country. A program of satsangs, discourses, bhajans and kirtans was conducted on 15th and 16th July.

On the 17th, bhajans and kirtans started at 5 am in the morning and continued till 11 am along with Guru pada pooja, mantra diksha and upanayan diksha. Sri Swamiji's concluding satsang was delivered in the evening, following which the organizers presented a vote of thanks and ended with Shanti Path.

Sri Swamiji went to Delhi by air on the 18th. From there he flew to Finland via Paris. In Finland he conducted a teacher training course organized by the Finnish Yoga Federation for four hundred yoga teachers from 22nd to 28th July. Thereafter Sri Swamiji conducted a yoga course for European yoga teachers from 29th July to 9th August at the Yoga University, Paris and a program in Zinal, Switzerland, from 12th to 19th August.

The month-long teacher training courses were running regularly at Ganga Darshan, Munger. A fifteen-day health management course was also started from the 16th to 30th of every month at the fervent request of people.

Sri Swamiji travelled to Zinal, Switzerland, to participate in the International Yoga Week held from 6th to 13th September. This year the European Yoga Federation celebrated the ninety-fourth birth anniversary of Swami Sivananda as part of the program. The conference was presided over by Swami Chidananda, President of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, and Swami Satchidananda, head of the Integral Yoga Institute, USA, and drew participants from forty-eight nations. The program was also attended by the heads of all Satyananda ashrams besides sixty-two disciples and devotees from Spain.

After the conference, Sri Swamiji arrived in Paris. There he conducted programs from 16th to 20th September organized by Swami Yogabhakti. He gave public lectures at the 'House of Consciousness' on tantra and the role of yoga in therapy, and conducted a week-long course at Condorcet College on theoretical and applied yogic techniques for unfolding the inner potential of man.

Sri Swamiji presented diplomas to the first batch of graduates of the four-year teacher training course run by Sivananda Ashram, France. He also accepted the presidency of the teacher training school.

From 20th to 23rd September, Sri Swamiji toured various ashrams and centres in Spain, giving satsangs and initiating devotees into mantra.

Sri Swamiji arrived in Rome on 24th September, where he gave a special satsang for aspirants interested in kriya yoga training.

After completing his European tour, Sri Swamiji visited Nagpur on 26th September, where he conducted a satsang conference. Thereafter he travelled by road to Raipur via Nandgram. On the 30th Sri Swamiji gave a press interview at the Raipur ashram. A four-day National Yoga Convention was scheduled to take place in Raipur from 1st October.

Sri Swamiji presided over the event held at the Netaji Stadium in Raipur. The mega-convention was inaugurated by the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Sri Arjun Singh. Eminent speakers had been invited from Bhopal, Indore, Nagpur and Baroda. Most of the sannyasin disciples of Sri Swamiji attended the convention, together with many doctors and therapists who had been associated with him for a long time. The Collector of Raipur, Sri Najeed Jang, and his wife gave a lot of help and support. Smt Krishna Devi and Sri Rajesh Muhammad gave discourses on the *Ramayana*. Kumari Karuna Mishra discoursed on Vedanta while Somnath Kannauj and Kumari Meera Harne sang soulful bhajans. After conducting a very successful four-day program, Sri Swamiji returned to Munger on 6th October.

Swami Niranjan conducted a yoga camp for over two hundred participants in Los Angeles. In September he conducted programs at Charlottesville and other places in Virginia. He also conducted a big yoga program in Washington.

Sri Swamiji and Swami Amritananda arrived in Singapore on 5th November for the first anniversary celebrations of the Singapore ashram. On 6th November, Sri Swamiji lectured at the Elizabeth Medical College. On 7th November, he inaugurated the first anniversary celebrations and gave an inspiring satsang to the devotees and disciples who had come from Malaysia and other nearby countries. He also gave mantra initiation to many aspirants. Sri Swamiji stayed in Singapore till the 10th, giving satsangs, talks and initiations at the residences of devotees. He returned to India on the 11th.

In December, Sri Swamiji travelled to South America. From the 3rd to the 17th of December, he toured the entire length and breadth of Colombia. Thereafter he went to Germany, after which he returned to Munger to conduct an upcoming course for European yoga teachers at Ganga Darshan.

A comprehensive tour of South India has been chalked out for Sri Swamiji during January-February 1982. Preparations have begun for the first South India Yoga Convention to be held in Bangalore in the last week of January.

### **The evolution of Ganga Darshan**

Time is flying and so is Gurudev's yoga campaign. The Ganga Darshan complex situated atop the famous hillock dating back to the Mahabharata era is fast taking shape. The platform of Karna Chaura, where gold was once distributed, has been transformed into a sadhana hall. The magnanimous king Karna would distribute fifty kilos of gold daily from this site. Today the illustrious disciple of Bhumandareshwar Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, is distributing the golden science of yoga from that very place. There was a time when people needed gold and wealth. But in the consumerist

society of today, people have all amenities and luxuries, yet they do not know peace, health or joy. They are searching everywhere for physical wellbeing and mental peace, and it is at this historical place that they are attaining that objective through the means of yoga. Sri Swamiji is opening new chapters of yoga to help and guide lay people as well as serious aspirants.

Another floor is being built on top of the kutir next to the sadhana hall. This will serve as Sri Swamiji's residence. There is a road behind the kutir which curves down to a gate at the back where vehicles headed towards the Annapoorna building or the press building will enter. Behind the road is the Yoga Arogya building. Closer to the gate is the site where the Annapoorna building is coming up. Construction work has also started for the latest building, the Press building. It will stretch for a furlong; the ground floor will house the press while the upper floor will have sixty-five to seventy residential rooms. The upper floor will also have big halls at both ends of the building. This will be a female residential area, housing the swamis and the ladies who come to attend courses in the ashram, and will be known as Shakti Vihar.

The panoramic view of the northward bound Ganga is a sight to behold from Ganga Darshan! Now a veritable Yoga Ganga has started flowing from Ganga Darshan. Besides the month-long teacher training courses, fifteen-day yoga sadhana and health management courses have also commenced. Sri Swamiji will initiate other significant projects in due course. His vision is vast and far-reaching.

One day a big crowd of people was sitting around Sri Swamiji. He said to them, "After the Press building will come the Main Building. This will be seven storeys high and will house a research centre, which will have computerized machines for carrying out research into diseases and the application of medicines and yogic therapy for their treatment. An institution known as Sivananda Math will give scholarships to deserving students, books and stationery to poor children, open schools in rural areas, dig hand-pumps

and wells, and distribute clothes and medicines to poor villagers. It will render all possible help to the needy and destitute . . .” Everyone was struck with wonder at the scope of Sri Swamiji’s vision. In the words of Sri Govardhan Prasad Singh:

*On the blessed hill of King Karna  
stands the majestic figure of Swami Satyananda.  
O Ma Ganga! Gently whisper who is the greater of the two,  
the wealthy king or the penniless sannyasin?*

*O ancient fort of Mir Qasim’s times!  
how long will you remain silent?  
Tell me the truth! Is the Karna of yesteryear  
indeed the Satyananda of the present?*

*The former doled out gold every single day,  
the latter gifts the fruits of yoga in every possible way.  
One gifted wealth and prosperity to paupers,  
the other takes away the pain of sufferers.*

*One was the pupil of Parashurama,  
the other is a disciple of Sivananda.  
One had a vast army of chariots and soldiers,  
the other has millions of disciples and yoga practitioners.*

*Karna searched for Arjuna on the battlefield,  
Swami Satyam is searching for the infinite.  
The former desired to fight and win,  
the latter is fighting the desires within.*

*If Karna was a Raja of Dwapara yuga  
Swami Satyam is a Rajarishi of Kali yuga,  
Teaching the karma yoga of Sri Krishna  
to all the modern-day Arjunas.*

*Karna Chaura has now become Ganga Darshan,  
poised to revive the ancient yoga tradition.  
Its doors are open to one and all,  
no one, young or old, is debarred.*

*O Ma Ganga! I can hear your whisper now,  
Karna Chaura is happy beyond measure  
For the Karna of yore has returned hither  
and Ma Chandi is beaming with pleasure.*

### **Activities during 1982**

The first International Kriya Yoga Course was conducted at Ganga Darshan from 31st December 1981 to 15th January, 1982 under the supervision of Sri Swamiji. The course attracted aspirants from France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Greece, Israel, USA, Colombia and Australia. The classes were conducted in the Karna Chaura sadhana hall. Classes for the other health management and yoga sadhana courses were held in the old Sivananda Ashram.

A group of aspirants from Chile visited the ashram in February for training in kriya yoga. There is a lot of interest and enthusiasm amongst overseas yoga practitioners to learn this ancient science.

Sri Swamiji went on a widespread tour of South India from 18th January to 16th February. He travelled to Bombay first, where he conducted a program on 18th and 19th January. On 20th he reached Bangalore. From 22nd to 24th January he conducted the first South India Yoga Convention there. Thereafter he conducted programs in Hasan on 25th January, Mysore on 26th January, Trivandrum from 27th to 29th January, Coimbatore from 29th to 31st January, Trichy from 2nd to 3rd February, Madurai from 4th to 5th February, Biveli on 6th February, Madras from 7th to 10th February, Hyderabad from 11th to 14th February, and at Poona on 15th February. He returned to Bombay on the 16th.

Hindi-medium teacher training courses will be conducted at Ganga Darshan in the months of March, April, May, June, July, August and October. Both English-medium and Hindi-medium courses will run during the months of May and October. The fifteen-day health management and yoga sadhana courses will run concurrently. Special kriya yoga,

swara yoga and advanced sadhana courses will be held during November, December, January and February.

Sri Swamiji toured Europe during March and April. His first stop was Switzerland, where he inaugurated and conducted the annual convention of the Swiss Yoga Federation from 19th to 21st March. On 26th March, he lectured at the International Congress for Natural Medicine in Geneva. From 28th March to 3rd April, he gave satsangs in Spain and Morocco. Thereafter he participated in programs and interviews organized by Swami Pragyamurti in London from 5th to 7th April. Sri Swamiji's subsequent programs were held in Martinique from 8th to 13th April, Glasgow from 14th to 16th April, Newcastle from 17th to 18th April, Manchester from 19th to 21st April and at the Satyananda ashram, Denmark, on 23rd April.

A three-day program of bhajans, kirtans and satsangs was organized at Ganga Darshan in February to commemorate the Foundation Day of Bihar School of Yoga. Sri Rajesh Ramayani discoursed on the *Ramayana* every evening. The program was attended by many devotees from out of town as well.

The kitchen in the newly-built Annapoorna building at Ganga Darshan was inaugurated on 9th March 1982, the auspicious day of Holi. Until now meals had been cooked and served in the old ashram. On the 9th, the sannyasins and students were served prasad in the Annapoorna building and from that day onwards meals were prepared here. The entire kitchen in the old ashram was shifted to Ganga Darshan and on 15th March, the ashram office was also transferred to Ganga Darshan. Most of the ashram activities began to be conducted from Ganga Darshan. The sannyasins continued to live in both places.

The construction of the press building began in full swing. The roof was cast in June and the floor-polishing began. It was decided to have the Guru Poornima celebrations in this building. It was also planned to shift the entire press to the new building by December. The upper floor rooms would be finished later.



The ruins of what was perhaps once a royal bungalow are impossible to repair and reconstruct. Sri Swamiji announced that a seven-storeyed building would come up on that very site and that he would perform bhoomi poojan on the auspicious day of Guru Poornima itself. The July health management and teacher training courses were cancelled and Guru Poornima preparations began in right earnest.

Swami Niranjan conducted a tantra yoga shivir at the Astara Foundation, California, USA.

On 9th May, Sri Swamiji arrived in Tokyo where a big crowd of devotees and disciples accorded him a very warm welcome. Sri Swamiji undertook a comprehensive tour of Japan, visiting among other places, Kyoto, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He gave lectures and satsangs at all the places he visited. The founder of the International Institute for Religion and Parapsychology, Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama and his associates received Sri Swamiji very warmly and organized many lectures at universities and research centres. He also gave an interview at the local television station.

Sri Swamiji stopped in Los Angeles on his way to Colombia. Swami Niranjan, together with Kamal and Jivat Mukhi, Swami Prashantananda and Mata Anjani came from San Francisco for Sri Swamiji's darshan. Many Indian and American disciples had the good fortune to have his darshan and hear his satsang.

Sri Swamiji arrived in Medellin, Colombia, on 19th May and inaugurated the new ashram there. He then travelled to San Agustin, which is a living relic of Colombia's ancient past.

On 23rd May, Sri Swamiji arrived in Santo Domingo where he inaugurated and conducted the Caribbean Yoga and Health seminar organized by the local Satyananda Ashram. He gave regular lectures at the Syrio-Lebanese-Palestinian club from 23rd to 31st May. He addressed medical professionals, gave television interviews and initiated many aspirants into mantra. He returned to India on 3rd June.

The twin Hindi-English teacher training courses conducted during the month of May drew an enthusiastic

response from yoga practitioners. Separate classes were conducted for the two groups.

Sri Devendranath Gupta, who was affectionately called Dadaji, passed away on 16th June 1982. He was eighty-three years old. He was a very close disciple and ardent devotee of Sri Swamiji, and the vice-president of the ashram managing committee at the time of his demise. He had been practising law in Munger since 1928 and was associated with the leading newspapers of his time, including the *Statesman*, *Indian Nation*, *Amrit Bazaar Patrika*, *Yugantar*, *Anand Bazaar Patrika*, *Searchlight*, etc. Later on he started his own weekly, *Sacchi Baat*. Ever since the ashram opened in 1964, the transformation of Karna Chaura had been his dream, which finally materialized in 1978 owing to his unrelenting efforts. Dadaji was truly a saint who epitomized the ideal of 'simple living and high thinking'.

Guru Poornima celebrations were held at Ganga Darshan from 4th to 6th July. A two-day shivir began on the 4th, which included a sadhana class in the morning, Sri Swamiji's satsang in the afternoon followed by a question-answer session, discourses on the *Gita* by Sandhya Kumari and Karuna Mishra and *Ramayana* katha by Smt Krishna Devi. All the programs were conducted in the newly built press building.

On the afternoon of 5th July, Sri Swamiji conducted bhoomi poojan and laid the foundation stone for the main building of Ganga Darshan.

On 6th July, bhajan and kirtan started in the huge hall of the press building at 5 am. Guru pada pooja began at 6 am. Thousands of devotees from India and abroad had gathered to pay their respects and receive the blessings of beloved Gurudev. Hundreds of aspirants were given initiation into mantra, karma sannyasa and poorna sannyasa. Upanayan ceremony was also conducted for young boys, which was followed by Sri Swamiji's benedictory speech. In the evening a bhajan and kirtan program was conducted during which Kumari Karuna Mishra discoursed on the Upanishads and Smt Krishna Devi on the *Ramayana*.

Sri Swamiji conducted a seminar on yogic and spiritual literature organized by the Bhagalpur Yoga Mitra Mandal on 9th July. On the 18th of July, he gave satsang at a public meeting organized at the Naturopathy Institute, Munger.

In August Sri Swamiji visited the USA. There he conducted a series of programs from 22nd August to 13th September, organized by Swami Niranjana. Next he flew to Italy where he conducted yoga seminars and satsang programs from 15th to 30th September. Thereafter Sri Swamiji was in Greece from 1st to 7th October, conducting programs organized by Satyananda Ashram, Greece.

After returning to India after his American and European tours, Sri Swamiji stayed in Ganga Darshan for a while, interacting with the participants of the teacher training course.

On 28th October Sri Swamiji arrived in Sambalpur, Orissa. There he conducted the All India Yoga Convention from 29th October to 1st November. Disciples, devotees, aspirants and yoga practitioners had converged in large numbers from India as well as abroad for the convention. Lectures, satsangs, personal interviews and mantra initiations continued throughout the convention.

Sri Swamiji conducted a program in Puerto Rico on 14th and 15th November organized by the International Yoga Teachers Federation. He gave lectures and satsangs in South America from 21st to 24th November and in Santo Domingo from 25th to 27th November. Subsequently he stayed in Medellin, Colombia, from 28th November to 6th December, where his program of satsangs and discourses continued.

Swami Niranjana delivered lectures on yoga and conducted yoga camps in Michigan, Virginia, Washington DC, Puerto Rico, Denver and San Jose.

Sri Swamiji presided over the Mithila yoga convention at Begusarai from 10th to 12th December and inaugurated the newly constructed ashram there.

From 25th to 27th December, Sri Swamiji conducted the Thane yoga convention. On 24th December, he gave an

address at the Homi Bhabha Atomic Research Institute on the pathology of diseases according to the yogic viewpoint. On 25th December he reached Thane with his disciples, where he was welcomed by Sri Morarji Desai. The Thane yoga convention was inaugurated by Sri Morarji Desai himself, and the proceedings were conducted by Sri Swamiji. A large number of doctors, researchers, scientists and yoga therapists attended the convention, along with thousands of devotees and disciples. This grand four-day convention proved significant in many respects.

Sri Swamiji gave satsangs at the Bombay branch of Bihar School of Yoga on the 29th and left for Munger on the 30th.

### **Installation of Swami Niranjana as Sri Swamiji's successor**

On 19th January 1983, the auspicious day of Basant Panchami and the nineteenth anniversary of the foundation of Bihar School of Yoga, Swami Satyananda Saraswati handed over its presidentship to Swami Niranjana Sarananda Saraswati. Swami Niranjana had been running the Satyananda ashrams in the USA till now. He had just returned three days ago, on the 16th as per the wishes of his guru.

In light of the worldwide revival and popularity of yoga, Swami Satyananda is constantly being requested to conduct ever more yoga programs nationally and internationally, and give greater impetus and guidance to the various ashrams, schools and centres affiliated with Bihar School of Yoga. Sri Swamiji will continue to work for the mission of spreading yoga and guiding the Bihar School of Yoga in the capacity of its founder president.

The only child of Swami Satyananda's earliest disciples, Satyavrat and Dharmashakti, Swami Niranjana Sarananda Saraswati was born on 14th February 1960 for the fulfilment of Sri Swamiji's mission. Sri Swamiji came to Nandgram from Mumbai on 19th March. His eyes lit up as soon as he held the thirty-five day-old baby in his arms. It seemed as if guru and disciple exchanged secret glances . . . and then the guru burst out laughing, "This is Niranjana, who has come for a special

mission. A mission that extends to many, many souls. He has come as a ray of light, equipped with all the requisite items. I am sure that the two of you will turn this spark of divinity into something truly divine. He deserves not just the love and regard of his parents but of the society, the nation and entire humanity. He is truly immaculate and flawless, so always call him Niranjan.”

With the blessings of his divine guru, the young Niranjan amazed everyone with his talent and activities. He joined the ashram and took up sannyasa at an age where other children hide their faces in their mother’s laps and walk holding their father’s hand. From the very beginning, the boy-yogi Niranjan received a different kind of education. Living in the company of his guru in a disciplined ashram environment led to the unfolding of an astonishing self-awareness and intuition. Side by side he also was exposed to many different people, situations and cultures.

At the age of ten, on 10th February 1970, the auspicious day of Basant Panchami, he was initiated into sannyasa. In March 1971, he was sent to northern Ireland to help with the newly formed ashram there. Touring, lecturing and giving programs in Ireland, Scotland, England, France, Switzerland and Austria, he returned to Munger in October 1973 with a group of Colombian devotees to attend the Golden Jubilee celebrations.

Swami Niranjan returned to South America in 1974. There he researched archaeological sites and other historical artefacts, providing evidence of an ancient yogic culture in the pre-Columbian civilization. For the next few years he ran ashrams, gave lectures and seminars, taught classes and toured different areas of South America and Australia.

In 1976, he returned to India from Australia with Sri Swamiji. In Munger, he took up the entire affairs of the ashram, including the press. He also served as Sri Swamiji’s secretary. From December 1977, he started running the Calcutta ashram. He also contributed to the diabetes research work conducted in Calcutta and Burla, Orissa. He turned out extraordinary work during his stay in Calcutta.

In June 1979, Swami Niranjan arrived in Greece. He toured many places in Europe, conducting programs, conventions and seminars, and helping in the management of different ashrams and yoga centres. His stay in Europe turned out to be extremely hectic and busy.

He travelled to the USA in April 1980. There he delivered lectures and conducted programs in over twenty-five cities. In October, he established the Satyananda Ashram, USA. During his stay in America, he met many Christian priests, Buddhist monks, disciples of Swami Sivananda and other important religious and spiritual figures. He visited many research centres and participated in an extensive research project with Dr Joe Kamiya of California. He conducted programs in colleges, universities, Lions and Rotary Clubs throughout the country. He stayed in America till the beginning of 1983, running ashrams and propagating yoga.

On 16th January, 1983, he returned to India as per Sri Swamiji's directive, and on 19th January 1983, the auspicious day of Basant Panchami, Sri Swamiji installed the twenty-three-year-old Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati as the president of Bihar School of Yoga, placing a very big responsibility on his young shoulders.

In the words of Swami Satyasangananda, Sri Swamiji's secretary:

1983 heralds in new dimensions and horizons for BSY. Building an institution is itself a mammoth task but to find suitable successors to maintain the high ideals and standards is no less important. Right from its inception, Swami Satyananda has played the dual role of guru and administrator, two roles diametrically opposed and contradictory to each other, which led him into many difficulties from time to time, and which he survived with unsurpassable skill.

We are all familiar with the role of a guru. He inspires, instructs and is the guiding light for many lives. For those of you who have a guru, it is unthinkable to live this life

without nurturing that relationship. It would be tantamount to having no eyes to see or ears to hear, but have you ever stopped to wonder how a guru meets the demands of his disciples? How is it that not just one or two or three, but thousands and millions of people all over the world are able to draw energy from that one source? It is obvious that he is able to delve into deeper and higher states of consciousness where no duality exists, where he is able to sift the true from the untrue, the mundane and the gross experience from pure experience. It is this ability which enables him to deal with the problems of people with accurate precision.

However, if at the same time he has to also play the role of administrator, it is necessary that from time to time he must return or come down to the practical, day-to-day affairs of life. So on the one hand he must go deep within, and on the other he must externalize that same consciousness. Of course this constant fluctuation from higher to lower states of mind is not a trifling matter, and not easily attainable, for one state of mind is not complementary to the other. Only a *jivanmukta*, one enlightened in this life, can do it with utmost ease. Swami Satyananda has been the epitome of such a person. His decisions as administrator have been flawless and his guidance to people illuminating.

For how much longer must these demands press on him? Sri Swamiji often jokingly says, "My life has been divided into twenty-year cycles. I was born in 1923, I joined my guru's ashram in 1943, I opened my ashram in 1963, and now, 1983 is the last turning point, I retire." When he sees the disappointed and disconsolate look on our faces, he always hastens to add, "When I say retire, I mean as an administrator. I shall continue to guide and inspire the people as long as I live."

Another very relevant point which Sri Swamiji often mentions is that it is always necessary for the founder of an institution to step down and install his successor

during his lifetime, so that the succeeding person can master the work thoroughly. This is especially relevant to a sannyasa institution where nothing really belongs to any particular person.

The inability of many spiritual leaders to effect this change has been instrumental in the downfall of many institutions. We have seen many jivanmuktas who function dynamically during their lifetime, but have been unable to leave behind pillars of strength. Obviously, at some time, they must give their responsibility to others and for the fulfilment of that responsibility the decision must be taken at the correct time. After all, a flower only blossoms when the soil and the season are right. Sri Swamiji, who has always maintained accurate timing in making his decisions, has chosen 1983 to nominate his successor. This decision will bring a host of questions to people's minds. Possibly you are among those who wonder about the future of BSY after Sri Swamiji retires from the administration.

As you will see, Sri Swamiji, with his meticulous eye for detail, has been thinking not only of the present but also years into the future. After all, the disciples and devotees all over the world must have the assurance that the institution which they have worked so hard for will not dissolve. At present BSY has many ashrams, innumerable centres and a vast number of inspired schools, thousands of teachers and a host of sannyasins of different nationalities and religions spread out over the world, with the headquarters in Munger. To support them it is necessary to have adequate teachers, an efficient administration, a proper internal management and inspiring guidance.

The sannyasins who have been trained by Sri Swamiji as teachers are of a very high calibre and have been producing excellent results and responses wherever they go. These sannyasins, whose number is always on the increase, will continue to spread the teachings far and wide. For the administration, Swami Niranjanananda, heading



the Board of Directors, will handle all affairs directly. For a disciple it is of paramount importance that he should be able to follow every command of his guru, verbal or otherwise. He should be able to anticipate and remain constantly alert to every need of the guru; only then can the guru transmit his knowledge and guidance to the disciple and continue his mission through the disciple.

Swami Niranjanananda has always maintained the ideals and standards of such a disciple. Although only twenty-three years of age, his experience, maturity and astute judgement can be compared to a person twice his age. He has travelled widely from the age of eleven, perhaps little knowing the immense responsibilities that would befall him later. However, judging from his past record, one feels that the responsibility rests on very young but capable shoulders.

In the sannyasa parampara or tradition, according to the guidelines set down by Adi Shankaracharya, it is the responsibility of the guru to impart his knowledge to worthy disciples so they may continue the work even after the guru relinquishes his duties. The work, after all, is being done with a definite purpose in mind and is not the whim of an individual. It has a far greater and wider vision, the benefits and far-reaching effects of which should be felt not only in this decade but in decades to come. This culture, way of life and philosophy must not become extinct with the ravages of time, and neither should it be restricted only to a few people. Rather, we must diversify, we must spread the systems of yoga to all corners of the world. We must preserve this fund of knowledge which can help us in every sphere of our lives so that not only our children but our grandchildren and great grandchildren may know and be able to judge for themselves the best way of life.

Now that Sri Swamiji is no longer at the helm of administration, the range and scope which he will be able to cover will increase considerably. In this respect we can

look forward to seminars and conventions in different countries, cities, towns and villages, which may be arranged for him to preside over, so that, in the words of his Guru, he may continue taking yoga from door to door and from shore to shore.

The devotees, disciples and admirers of Sri Swamiji watched him in wonder on that historic Basant Panchami day. He seemed very jovial and happy. He initiated many aspirants into mantra and karma sannyasa. He also gave poorna sannyasa initiation to twenty aspirants on the occasion, after which his benedictory satsang followed. The old disciples of Sri Swamiji, who had been associated with him since his parivrajaka days, prayed and hoped that this immortal bird of the free skies would continue to bless one and all with his inspiring company and words of wisdom . . .

# Expansion and Consolidation of the Mission



O jewel amongst men!

Even the Creator is astonished to see your dazzling countenance. Purifying your entire being in the fire of knowledge until it shone like molten gold, you remained aloof and unattached in this world like the proverbial lotus leaf.

*Ganga tatastham chirayogirajam, yoge ramantam shuchi  
shaanta moortim*

*Aananda samstham vipine vasantam, kaashaayavantam  
satatam namami.*

I bow to the ochre-robed Swami Satyananda, the eternal master of yoga, who lives on the banks of the sacred Ganga and is the very embodiment of peace, purity and bliss.'



**H***ari anant, hari katha ananta* – ‘God is limitless, and so are his pastimes’. Yet people strive to express the glory of God in whatever manner and language they can conceive. So have I endeavoured to write something about beloved Gurudev, a very difficult if not impossible task. I’ve always had an aptitude for writing. I used to write regularly for the Sunday edition of the local newspaper and the women’s magazines Didi and Janani on topics such as recipes, embroidery and common fasts and festivals. All this became insignificant after coming into contact with Sri Swamiji. I began writing down his satsangs, which I then filed methodically. Sometimes I would send one of them for publication in the local newspapers and periodicals. In 1957, Sri Swamiji told me to write about my experiences during the Gangotri trip. That was the beginning of this memoir.

Thereafter Sri Swamiji instructed me to compile and edit his satsangs, to summarize his teachings in the form of concise and pithy sayings, to write articles on Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri and other popular places of pilgrimage. “These articles should give a good introduction to their subjects. Take up this task immediately. You have to get three or four books ready soon. You are intelligent and capable, you don’t need detailed explanations. Always keep pen and paper with you and go on writing.”

After publication of the booklet *Akasha ka tara, dharati ka phool* (an offering of love to Sri Swamiji by Swami Niranjan), Satyavratji said, “You must now write a book on the life and works of Sri Swamiji.” Back then I could not even imagine what to write and how. Satyavratji would have conversations with Sri Swamiji every now and then, and whenever Sri Swamiji mentioned something of significance or related his childhood days, Satyavratji would jot it down in shorthand which I would later transcribe into my diary. Satyavratji would always say, “Take good care of these diaries and papers. They are very precious. You have to write a *Guru Gita* one day. Whether I am around or not, the day your book is ready my soul will be extremely gratified. My good wishes and blessings will always help you in your writing.”

After Satyavratji’s accident, this task began to look impossible. But ideas for the book kept cropping up. Sometimes I would gaze at the old files, sometimes I would get lost in memories. Time flew by, circumstances changed. Two decades had gone by before I thought seriously about the book again. By the grace of the Lord, I have Gurudev’s ‘jar of nectar’ with me – his words, his ideas, the private conversations, the satsangs, the journeys undertaken together, the shared experiences. I heard some anecdotes about him from his guru bhais, others I read in books. Whatever matter I came across in the diaries and files of his devotees, disciples and friends, I collected it and mentally placed it in its proper place in the book.

“It is easy to become God,” Sri Swamiji used to say, “but very difficult to become a true human being.” And I am taking the liberty of writing about a genuinely great human being, who has now given a new direction to the course of his life.

One may have heard of great ascetics and renunciates who became enmeshed in the trammels of householder life on account of attachment to trifling things, but for Sri Swamiji to walk away from an establishment as prosperous and renowned as Ganga Darshan, which he himself created from scratch, and adopt the lifestyle of a penniless mendicant,

speaks volumes about the quality of his tyaga and vairagya. It seems as if the great King Janaka of yore has returned in the form of Swami Satyananda in this age. Whenever I think about this momentous point in his life, I find myself at a loss for words to adequately express my feelings.

Bhumandaleshwar Swami Sivananda fashioned a radiant sun from the light of his own luminous soul, whose life-giving rays are now permeating each and every speck of this world. Sri Swamiji left his home at the tender age of nineteen and destiny brought him to the feet of Swami Sivananda. Twelve years of difficult and harsh ashram life gave him valuable insights into the human condition. He realized that putting on a 'holier-than-thou' attitude and 'preaching-from-the-pulpit' could not be the aim of his life. He must live the life of a common man. And in 1956 he set out towards his goal with the blessings of his guru Swami Sivananda.

He conducted his first program in Delhi. From Delhi itself he implanted the seed of his sankalpa and mission into Satyavratji. He finally arrived in Nandgram on 7th June 1956, where he boldly proclaimed, "Yoga is the culture of tomorrow," and "Nandgram is my Sarnath."

Theoretical knowledge is useful for attaining discrimination, but in Sri Swamiji's opinion, knowledge must be imbibed and made practical in one's life. One should not only know and understand the spiritual truths but mould one's life in accordance with them. Our knowledge of yoga was encapsulated in cryptic sutras and only a few Indian aspirants understood them. But now hundreds and thousands of aspirants throughout India and the entire world know about kundalini shakti and practise asana and pranayama, ajapa japa and kriya yoga. The Yoga-Ganga is for the benefit of one and all.

Sri Swamiji is the founder, inspirer and leader of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement. His goal is to inculcate yogic qualities and virtues in the human mind. He has shattered the walls of misconceptions and ignorance that surrounded this life-giving treasure of yoga. He has

been waging a crusade to liberate the science of yoga from the ancient vault-like scriptures it had remained entrapped within.

Charvaka, Buddhist, Jain, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Yoga, Mimamsa, Vedanta, Upanishads and the *Gita* – these constitute the sublime philosophies of ancient India. Cutting and pasting together little portions of these different philosophies led to the creation of different sects and cults. Each philosophy highlights only one aspect of the Absolute Truth. Truth has many forms, but the common man is unable to grasp this fundamental principle; consequently the followers of one philosophy become antagonistic towards the followers of another school of thought.

Therefore, it was but natural that in an age where the requirements of man have changed, where his beliefs, values and lifestyle have undergone a sea-change, the cultural and spiritual traditions began to fall apart despite great efforts to save them. Even the nation fell apart. What to speak of the country and its culture, even its most famous religious icon, Lord Shiva, went over to the Chinese side along with his abode, Mt Kailash! Under such circumstances, in an age plagued by materialism and consumerism, Sri Swamiji began his yoga movement. In 1962 his plans took concrete shape. Nandgram became the epicentre of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement and Sri Swamiji's Yoga-Ganga began flowing from door to door and shore to shore.

The divine guru gave his blessings and mandate to the worthy disciple, who resolved to establish a yoga ashram on the banks of the northward-bound Ganga and keep the flame of his guru's wisdom and knowledge eternally alive. And that resolve materialized with the help and support of Sri Kedarnath Goenka.

People from all castes, creeds, religions and walks of life started coming to Bihar School of Yoga to learn yoga. Neither Bihar School of Yoga nor the International Yoga Fellowship promoted any religion, sect or doctrine. Rather, their aim was to work for the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing



and growth of the ordinary person through the propagation of systematic and scientific techniques of sadhana. By and by people began to adopt the principles and practices of yoga. The sphere of activities began to grow and aspirants began to come from all corners of the globe. Branches of the International Yoga Fellowship and Bihar School of Yoga started coming up in many towns and cities, and camps and conventions were organized all over the country and the world.

The future possibilities are limitless in scope and indescribable in nature. The science of yoga is a very ancient treasure trove of India. Like other sciences, new investigations and discoveries are continuing in this subject as well. The scope of this science is not limited to a few recluses and hermits now. Rather, children and adults, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, illiterate and educated, engineers, doctors, lawyers and professors – all are proud participants in this grand yoga-yajna.

Sri Swamiji is determined to revive and regenerate the ancient yogic culture. He is ceaselessly striving to re-establish the lost glory and reputation of yoga. After all, the science of yoga is as relevant in the present atomic age as it was in the age of the ancient rishis.

Words fail to do justice to the Herculean efforts Sri Swamiji has put into his mission. In such a short span of time, hundreds of ashrams, yoga centres and allied institutions have come up all over the globe, where thousands of conventions, classes, seminars and teacher training courses have been organized till now, not to mention the whirlwind tours where Sri Swamiji would travel by night and conduct programs by day, covering twenty-five to thirty cities in just a month. Neither rest nor relaxation, just travel and programs. Only someone of the calibre of Sri Swamiji could conduct such military-style campaigns. Others cannot even dare think of accomplishing such a thing.

Over a hundred books authored by Sri Swamiji have been published to date. Many titles go out of stock soon after printing, such is the demand for these books. Millions of

copies of Sri Swamiji's classic book *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* have already been sold, and the book has been reprinted more than twenty-five times in English as well as Hindi. It has been translated into many foreign languages as well, where it is fondly referred to as the 'family doctor'. Many other books of his have also been translated into foreign languages.

Sri Swamiji once said, "My mission is a divinely ordained path, whose final destination is the transformation of human society and civilization into a divine one. This is my sadhana, which I shall keep on practising till the end of my life." Following the maxim of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, Sri Swamiji is striving to transform the whole world into a single family.

To constantly remain aware of Sri Swamiji's aforesaid statement and to always strive in that direction is the first and foremost duty of his disciples, devotees and members of the institutions he has created. We have to work hard to improve our surroundings, wherever we may be. Adopting an attitude of love and compassion, we must create a giant global family. In order to keep alight the flame of world peace and universal brotherhood, we must consecrate our lives in this noble yoga yajna of Sri Swamiji.

Sri Swamiji set off alone from his guru ashram, but people kept joining on the way and his caravan kept on increasing. And it will go on increasing in the future as well . . . Sri Swamiji was unattached like a lotus leaf from the very beginning and that is how he will always remain. What he says, he does, and what he does, he says. His speech and action have always been congruent. This is what I have seen, understood and experienced over the course of my long association with Sri Swamiji.

Bihar School of Yoga is working and expanding in many areas. After the building of Ganga Darshan, many possibilities and avenues for research work have opened up and work has already started along these lines. Sri Swamiji also started the altruistic activities of Sivananda Math. His satsangs, discourses, yoga seminars and mantra initiations continued unabated.

### Activities during 1983

On 23rd January 1983, Sri Swamiji conducted a satsang and mantra diksha program at the seminar hall of the agricultural college at Sabaur, Bhagalpur.

On 25th January, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati inaugurated the Prembhakti Harinam Yash Sankirtan Sammelan at Suryagarha, Munger, and delivered the opening address.

Health management and teacher training courses are being conducted regularly at Ganga Darshan. A gurukul education course will be conducted in the month of May for children aged seven to fourteen. It will be a month-long course in which hundreds of children are expected to participate. In view of this, all other courses will be cancelled in May.

On 3rd February, Sri Swamiji arrived in London with Swami Satyasangananda. From London he travelled to Manchester where he delivered lectures on kriya yoga, tantra and hatha yoga. On 5th February he gave an insightful talk on meditation and initiated many aspirants into karma sannyasa.

Sri Swamiji returned to London on 7th February and inaugurated a three-day program at Caxton Hall. In his speech, he announced his retirement and the installation of Swami Niranjan as the president of Bihar School of Yoga. The assembled devotees and well-wishers were extremely pleased to hear this news. Most of them knew Swami Niranjan quite well and were already anticipating his presidency.

Sri Swamiji spoke on kriya yoga, yoga nidra and meditation during the program. He also shed light on many other aspects of yoga and tantra. A yoga seminar was also organized later in London in which Sri Swamiji initiated many aspirants into mantra and sannyasa.

During his stay in London, Sri Swamiji also met Sri Bhanot, the Hindi news editor of the BBC. He also gave interviews to Mr Brian Natshire, the editor of *Yoga Today*, and Mr Kaushal, the editor of the Hindi journal *Amardeep*.

Sri Swamiji left for Plymouth on 11th February for a two-day seminar on kundalini yoga. Many aspirants received

mantra diksha during the seminar. On 14th February, Sri Swamiji departed for Harlow by road. In Harlow, Sri Swamiji inaugurated a yoga seminar on 14th evening. On 15th, he delivered lectures on yoga nidra, kriya yoga, meditation and various other aspects of yoga. He was also interviewed by Ronald Freeman, a local journalist. On 16th February, Sri Swamiji returned to London from where he flew to Paris.

In Paris, Sri Swamiji visited the Sivananda Ashram on the 16th. On the 17th, many aspirants and seekers met Sri Swamiji personally and received mantra diksha and sannyasa diksha from him.

On 18th February, Sri Swamiji lectured on 'Yoga and the Medical Management of Cardiovascular Disease' at a conference organized at Tenon Hospital. The conference was attended by leading French doctors. Thereafter Sri Swamiji went to Sivananda Ashram where he initiated many devotees into mantra.

On 19th February, Sri Swamiji presented diplomas to twenty-five students of DIPS, who had just completed their three-year yoga training course conducted by Swami Devatmananda at Sivananda Ashram. Sri Swamiji also went through the research articles that the students wrote during the course of their studies. Thereafter, Sri Swamiji conducted a discussion on 'The Synthesis of Western and Eastern Philosophies' at the Sorbonne University. The same day he lectured in the evening at the Dumas Medica on 'The Ancient Vedic Tradition of Rishi Sannyasa and its Relevance to Modern Man'. He gave sannyasa initiation to many deserving aspirants and then left for Pisa on the 20th.

He was accorded a warm welcome at Pisa airport by his Italian devotees and disciples. A seminar had been organized in Pisa where Sri Swamiji lectured on the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. Every day Sri Swamiji delivered discourses and gave mantra and karma sannyasa initiations. On 23rd February, Sri Swamiji left for Geneva, Switzerland.

A four-day yoga seminar had been convened in Geneva on the subject of chakras. The seminar attracted participants

from all over Europe, who heard Sri Swamiji explain in great detail the location and function of the various chakras in the human body. Many participants received mantra and karma sannyasa initiation from Sri Swamiji as well.

On 27th February, Sri Swamiji arrived in Barcelona where many disciples and aspirants were eagerly awaiting him. He visited the residences of many devotees and conducted satsangs there. Satsang was also organized at the ashram in Barcelona every day. On 3rd March, Sri Swamiji travelled to Swami-land, an ashram in a rural setting, one hour away from Barcelona. There he spent the entire day in the beautiful, natural surroundings of the ashram. Many aspirants received mantra and karma sannyasa diksha there.

### **Blueprint for the future**

Excerpts from Sri Swamiji's satsangs delivered in Manchester and London during February 1983 follow:

Before I went to Swami Sivananda in 1943 I had met many gurus, but when I found him, I found the light. I feel proud that I lived with him up to 1956. It was a fantastic time. I had read about Christ many times, but never believed that such a man could live in this world. Compassion, love and consideration for others are very difficult qualities to find, but in Swami Sivananda I found such a man.

He had no attachments, yet he loved everybody. He was large-hearted yet disciplined and his life was a constant sacrifice. Anyone who came to him for anything at all received. He was very powerful. Thousands came to him for relief from sickness. He healed millions, yet never proclaimed it. At the time of his death, his disciples asked him, "What is your message to humanity?" He did not speak, but took out a pen and wrote his final message to mankind: 'God prays with you. Everything else is unimportant'.

In this short period, it is not possible for me to tell you all about him. I do not like to talk a lot about my guru

anyway. Well, I love him, and that is my business, not yours. You must find your own guru and have the same feelings for him. On the morning of 19th March 1956, he called me to his kutir and gave me a mission. I had to go into the wide world. At the time he said to me, "In 1923 you were born; in 1943 you came to me; in 1963 you will start working yourself; in 1983 your institutional work will come to a close, and after that you will be on the cosmic level." So, I am working according to his instructions.

Often since Swami Sivananda's mahasamadhi I have clearly felt his presence. I have distinctly heard his voice; but even today I do not know how to contact him. Even if I want to, I cannot. But when the experience comes, it is very clear, pleasant, calm and quiet. It comes to me when I want to kick everything I have created, whenever I want to close something. I do not like ashrams. Basically, I have always believed a swami should live a different kind of life, but I am not able to do it. I must go on, whether I like it or not.

The last time I felt his presence was in November 1982 when I was at the seashore in Puerto Rico and feeling slightly dull and depressed because of the weather. He said to me, "You are now free from your ashram life", and thereby released me. About ten swamis from America, Colombia and Europe were with me at the time, including Swami Niranjan. I called him over and said, "Now my plan is clear. I am not going to work any more with the administrative side of Bihar School of Yoga or any institution. You cancel your programs in America and return to Munger as soon as possible."

I chose him when he came to me at the age of four and trained him without telling him that he would succeed me. Now he will look after the whole mission as far as he can. Whether he manages it well or not is up to him; it is not my business now. I belong to yoga, not the Bihar School of Yoga. An institution is a means, not an end in itself.

In the beginning the movement is the means and the philosophy the end, but later the institution becomes the end and the philosophy the means. That happens with all religions, all institutions. We live just to make the organization or institution survive and I don't think I will be doing that now in my retirement. I am retiring from the institution that I created and worked for sincerely.

This means that I will have nothing to do with that institution as an institution; not that I am against it or that there have been any difficulties, but now I will not confine myself to any institutions and religions. A sannyasin should be beyond institutions and religions. For him, all spiritual institutions are a part of his soul and every religion is equally precious, important and meaningful.

During the coming twenty years, I will work for the good of mankind and my sadhana. Personally, I consider even yoga to be a means rather than an end. I have been thinking for many years that when people attain success, eminence and power, they forget the purpose. Instead of working for mankind, they work for themselves. We must work for yoga only as far as we can convince people that it can help them. We have to propagate a particular philosophy or science only to the extent that people can be benefited by it, but if we forget that the good of mankind in general is the goal, and not the teaching itself, then we have made a great mistake.

If you think about it deeply and properly, you will realize that institutions become stagnant. They become powerful with big administrators and officers amending the constitution, adding page after page, preparing dogmas for the survival of the institution, and then having links with political parties. This usually ends in complete chaos and it can happen to anyone. So, I thought that I would become free and talk to people about yoga. I realize that yoga has much more to give mankind than it has already given. Teaching yoga is necessary, but it has

been taught by and through various institutions, and it has become very limited and unacceptable to many.

All spiritual seekers should have these same aspirations and ideals that I am expressing now. They should be free from any representational movement, organization, clan, class or sect, and go on moving from place to place, so it cannot be said that they are working for an institution, for name, fame, money or anything. From November 1983 onwards, I will move out of the ashram and spend the next twenty years as a mendicant, let us say a 'royal' mendicant.

I will spend some time going from place to place, visiting all the tirthas. I am not fond of crowds. I do not need a feast for my eyes, because I have realized that it is only a few people who become the backbone of a real civilization. Where you gather the masses in tens of thousands, everything fails in the course of time. History has proved it. So I will be going only to the tirthas, and how I spend the next twenty years of my life after that, the future will tell.

Sri Swamiji left for India on 5th March 1983, and after spending a day in Bombay returned to Munger.

From 9th to 16th April, Sri Swamiji stayed at Satyananda Ashram, Australia. Many devotees received mantra diksha from him, and sixty aspirants received sannyasa diksha. Sri Swamiji extended his stay in Australia, staying at Mangrove Mountain till 22nd May. There he inaugurated the new press building, conducting ceremonial worship of the new printing machines. On 21st May, he initiated many aspirants into mantra, karma sannyasa and poorna sannyasa. He also spoke on swara yoga on the occasion. On 22nd May, he embarked for India together with Swami Satyasangananda.

A large scale 'Anga Yoga' convention had been organized in Bariarpur, fifteen kilometres from Munger, from the 15th to 17th of May. A big tent was erected at the local Phillips High School. Swami Niranjan lit the ceremonial lamp on the evening of the 15th and gave the inaugural speech. On the morning of 16th May, he initiated many aspirants into



mantra and in the afternoon he conducted bhoomi poojan and laid the foundation of the Bariarpur ashram with five stones. For the next three days, regular asana and pranayama classes were conducted in the mornings and satsangs and lectures during the rest of the day.

Four hundred and fifty children from all over the country converged at Bihar School of Yoga, Ganga Darshan, to participate in the gurukul education course. For the entire month of May, the ashram had the look and feel of a children's school. Classes, games, karma yoga, kirtans and satsangs went on throughout the day. The children were given complete freedom to play around and make mischief in the sprawling tree-laden environs of the ashram. The entire course was conducted under the skilful supervision of Swami Niranjan and turned out to be a grand success in all respects. The course ended on 25th May. Many children took mantra diksha and, expressing an ardent desire to come back the next year, they left the ashram happily and joyfully.

From 3rd June, the teacher's training courses recommenced.

On 10th July, Sri Swamiji together with Swami Satyasangananda and other sannyasins visited Patna. He met devotees and disciples, and spoke at public meetings and press conferences. Programs were conducted at the Rotary Club, local colleges and many other places. Sri Swamiji's message was recorded by All India Radio and broadcast soon after. Many disciples took mantra diksha, hundreds received personal advice and guidance, thousands had his darshan and listened to his satsangs. On 13th July, Sri Swamiji left for Calcutta. He stayed at the Calcutta ashram from 14th to 20th July, conducting satsangs and giving mantra initiation to many aspirants.

### **Guru Poornima 1983**

Sri Swamiji arrived in Raipur on 21st July with his sannyasin disciples to conduct the Guru Poornima Mahotsav. A special sadhana shivir was conducted on 22nd and 23rd July. Bhajans

and kirtans started at 5 am on the morning of the 24th. Guru pooja began at 6 am. Thousands of devotees gathered from all over India to perform guru pooja, the worship of their guru, as per the ancient Indian tradition. Devotees from Australia and South America recorded the entire proceedings for television broadcasting. The Raipur television centre also recorded the program, which was broadcast as a twenty-five minute capsule a couple of weeks later.

Sri Swamiji gave mantra and karma sannyasa initiation and delivered a deeply significant satsang. He said:

I have been participating in Guru Poornima celebrations since 1964, and this year is my last year of participation. Hereafter I will not be participating in any such program. Therefore, this year's Guru Poornima is very significant, and I want to make this very clear to all of you.

Till last year's Guru Poornima, my personality would remain constrained and conditioned, as if it were split into two parts, one outer and the other inner. One persona was that of a sadhu and the other of a guru. I had to fulfil both these roles. It was quite taxing at times, but somehow I have managed to play both these roles successfully for the last twenty years.

During earlier Guru Poornima programs, I used to wonder whether Guru Poornima was being celebrated for the guru or for the aspirant. You people do not realize this difference, because you come with faith and faith is so radiant that it dazzles the eyes and you miss many things. Just as the light from fifteen or twenty lamps is enough to dazzle the eyes, in the same manner one does not see any defects in the light of faith. The Guru Poornima that is being celebrated this year is for a free, liberated sadhu, who is not attached to anyone or anything. On this day of celebration there are no awards or rewards for anyone. Free from all duties and responsibilities, I shall now deliver the message of yoga from door to door in India and abroad, and rest anywhere in the lap of Mother Nature.

Whenever I feel like coming I will come, otherwise not. I am not beholden or bound to anyone. I have come here only to revive the powerful traditions of your ancestors and tell you the significance of this Guru Poornima that you are celebrating.

On this sacred day of Guru Poornima, the sannyasins must also reflect and decide what is their duty and obligation, what is their sadhana and tradition? Asana and pranayama is not our business or profession, rather it is our sadhana. And we should remain aloof from the little status and respect we gain during the course of teaching yoga to people. A sannyasin should always be totally unattached and aloof from all things. He has to live like a lotus leaf in water.

Another point I want to stress is that after taking mantra initiation, it is essential to practise regular japa of that mantra. Without sadhana one cannot acquire self-confidence, and without self-confidence one is powerless in face of the day-to-day problems that crop up in our lives. You have a storehouse of latent energy within you. Through sadhana you can awaken that energy and harness it to eradicate your problems. I don't claim that all of man's problems can be eradicated this way, but to a great extent man can eliminate his problems himself. Make a fifteen to twenty-five minute sadhana program of asana, pranayama and japa meditation for yourself and be regular in its practice. This sadhana gradually awakens *atmashakti*, the divine energy dormant in each and everyone. The sole purpose of the mantra given to you today is to awaken this energy, and this is my Guru Poornima message for everyone.

After the program Sri Swamiji left for his residence at Raipur ashram. As he was getting into the car, he summoned Dharmashakti and told her, "I won't go to Nandgram. You understand why, don't you? I won't come out of my room for the next two days," and so saying he left. Dharmashakti

reached the ashram an hour later. Her room was opposite Sri Swamiji's. His room was locked from the outside, and he had given strict instructions to keep it locked for the next two days. We were to open the door only when he phoned us.

After the decision to conduct the Guru Poornima program in Raipur had been made, Dharmashakti had requested Sri Swamiji to conduct a program in Nandgram on 26th July. Sri Swamiji had agreed and a program had been arranged from the 25th to the 27th. Details of the program had been published in the ashram magazines as well. Dharmashakti had completed all the necessary arrangements for the program at Nandgram and, after explaining everything to the swami-in-charge of the Nandgram ashram, had gone to Raipur for the Guru Poornima celebrations. There also she had spoken to Sri Swamiji regarding the program in Nandgram. "Have a two-day program," he had said, "I will stay there from 25th afternoon to 26th afternoon." She had relayed the message to Nandgram and the program had been printed in the local newspapers. Now with this sudden change in plans, Dharmashakti waited patiently, thinking, "Let it be as per Gurudev's wishes. I won't leave until I've met him." The ashram swami and other disciples and devotees would come up to Sri Swamiji's room every now and then and, seeing it locked, would turn back.

Sri Swamiji came out of samadhi on the morning of the 26th. He rang up the office downstairs and asked them to open the door. Dharmashakti went for his darshan and, sitting by his feet, listened to him talk for a long time. "Now that I am a free bird," he said, "I spent the last two days in a very relaxed and carefree manner. Many times in the past I had thought about doing something like this, but the Guru Poornima day would be so busy that I could never get any time for myself. You know my innermost thoughts and aspirations very well; I am doing all the things that I never thought of doing. I'm just repaying my guru's debt. There is no question of my choice or wish. I did not leave home to become a guru or open an ashram. I left home because I

had no reason to stay there anymore. I have let God's wish guide my actions all my life. The mandate of my guru is the voice of God for me. If He wants to accomplish something through me, that will happen for sure. There is nothing I can do about it. My only prayer to God is that I become a medium for the enactment of the divine will, not for the cheap display of yogic powers. In the end, it is God's will alone that reigns supreme.

"You have been associated with me for a long time. Don't dwell much on the fact that I did not go to Nandgram. I am everywhere, with each and everyone. If you had something special to gift me, bring it with you when you next come to Munger. When are you going to Nandgram?"

"Swamiji," I replied, "your flight is in the afternoon. I am planning to leave in the evening after your departure. I don't think much, but on returning to Nandgram, people will definitely ask me all kinds of questions about your absence. Things might be a little difficult, so bless me that I am strong enough to face any difficulty."

Sri Swamiji began to laugh, "You have received my blessings long ago. Not only the father, but the entire world will sing the praises of the brave and resolute child. You were capable, that is why you could receive the blessings. Hari Om."

Sri Swamiji left for Munger in the afternoon. I also returned to Nandgram by the evening train. It is a two-hour journey by train from Raipur. When I reached the press, many people were waiting for me. I learnt that bhajan and kirtan had been conducted in the ashram since morning. More than five hundred people were present there, including many devotees from out of town. "Sri Swamiji could not come because of unavoidable circumstances" was all I said by way of explanation. After answering innumerable phone calls and meeting innumerable people, I finally sent all the press employees home and got the press locked at 8 pm. I finally retired to my room. I had planned to do something there on Guru Poornima but was unable to do anything. An album

of thoughts was unravelling inside my mind. I tried hard to meditate, or just to do even japa, but couldn't. In the end I was helplessly carried away on the tide of thoughts coursing through my mind.

The web of thoughts kept expanding. Sri Swamiji, his deeds, his words were flashing by like the frames of a movie. Why is there suffering in life? Why is there incompleteness and want in humanity? The teaching I've imbibed from my guru is that the wholeness and fulfilment of human existence lies in the synthesis of material and spiritual life. The basis of this synthesis is a feeling of kinship with the whole of humanity, a sense of unity with the cosmic spirit. Food cannot give us peace, nor do mere ideals give us happiness. Rather than focusing exclusively on the body, mind or spirit, one's awareness must expand in all directions and become all-encompassing. Strive towards a compromise between yoga and bhoga, tyaga and vairagya, truth and untruth, theory and practice. One-sided development can never lead to complete beauty and fulfilment.

What a wonderfully sublime teaching in the light of which all paths leading to the final goal become crystal clear!

The great mission for which Sri Swamiji left home, took sannyasa, underwent difficult sadhanas, endured countless hardships during his wanderings, built ashrams and started the grand movement of spreading the light of yoga was not a cakewalk as many people think. It was more challenging than walking on a razor's edge or getting an elephant to pass through the eye of a needle. At the end of it all, Sri Swamiji simply says, "Yoga is not a sect or a religion but a way of life."

Guru paduka pooja had been organized at Ganga Darshan as well. Bhajans and kirtans started early in the morning on 24th July. The third floor of the main building was jam-packed with devotees and disciples. Paduka pooja was solemnized with great joy and devotion in the morning and in the evening, Sri Chandrashekhar Khan presented a program of devotional music and Smt Krishna Devi, an enlightening discourse on the *Ramayana*.

A kriya yoga and tattwa shuddhi course was organized at Ganga Darshan in October 1983 under Sri Swamiji's supervision and guidance. Separate classes were conducted for Indian and overseas students. More than two hundred aspirants from all over India participated in the course. The overseas course attracted aspirants from England, Italy and Greece. At the end of the course, many aspirants took karma sannyasa initiation.

On 26th October, Sri Swamiji gave satsang at the local Rotary Club in Munger.

Swami Niranjanananda inaugurated an eye camp in Bariarpur on 9th November.

Sri Swamiji left Munger on 9th November for a world tour. After giving darshan, satsang and diksha in Dhanbad, Sri Swamiji arrived in Calcutta where he presided over a seminar on 'The Yogic Management of Hypertension and Related Diseases' from the 11th to the 13th of November. Dr Swami Shankardevananda, Dr Swami Vivekananda, Justice T.K. Vasu (Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court), Sri D. Rai, Dr T.W. Tulpule, Bombay, Dr S.S. Sanyal from the Bellevue Clinic, Prof A.K. Madti of the neurophysiology department of Calcutta University, Dr Usha Sundaram and many other doctors and therapists participated in the seminar. A group of eminent doctors conducted a panel discussion on 'The Impact of Yoga on Heart Disease'. During the course of the seminar, two doctors took poorna sannyasa. After the seminar, Sri Swamiji left for Australia.

Sri Swamiji arrived in Sydney with Swami Satyasangananda on 16th November. On 28th November he addressed a large gathering at the Mangrove Mountain ashram and inaugurated a three-day seminar. An advanced kriya yoga course also began on the 28th under Sri Swamiji's watchful guidance. Sri Swamiji delivered illuminating satsangs on kriya yoga and tantra every day during the seminar.

On 4th December, Sri Swamiji inaugurated a 'Mantra, Nada and Symbol' week. Over the course of the week, he gave diksha to many aspirants. On the 11th, Sri Swamiji

inaugurated a special karma sannyasa course during which over fifty aspirants were initiated into karma sannyasa.

Sri Swamiji gave a public lecture in Sydney on 18th December. On 19th December, many aspirants took mantra diksha at Manly ashram. On 24th December, many devotees and acquaintances converged at Mangrove Mountain for mantra initiation, spiritual name and personal guidance. On 25th December, twenty-four aspirants took poorna sannyasa, and many others were initiated into mantra and karma sannyasa.

### **Activities during 1984**

A three-month introductory sannyasa course began in January at Ganga Darshan. The aim is not to make the participants take sannyasa, but to give them an exposure to the sannyasa lifestyle and help them gain valuable experiences of the sannyasa way of life.

Teacher training, health management and other yoga training courses will be conducted as in past years. A children's course will again be organized in May, but this time the children will have to be accompanied by their guardians.

On Basant Panchami, 7th February, the Foundation Day of BSY was celebrated. A three-day program was organized to commemorate the occasion. More than two thousand disciples, devotees and well-wishers participated in the program, which included havan, *Gita* chanting, bhajans, kirtans, prayers, meditation and Narayan bhoj. Swami Niranjan gave inspiring satsangs every evening.

On 15th January, Sri Swamiji left for Australia. In Newcastle, NSW, he gave interviews to newspapers and the ABC radio network. He visited the residence of Sri Ghosh where he gave a satsang on 'The Relevance of Yoga in Daily Life' to the assembled Indian expatriates and other members of the Indian Vedic Society.

Sri Swamiji left for Cairns, Queensland, on 20th January. On the way he stopped over in Townsville for a television



interview. In Cairns he participated in a press conference organized by the radio network and local newspapers. The next day he gave public lectures on meditation. On 22nd January, he inaugurated the Satyananda ashram in Cairns and on the 23rd he gave a lecture on the therapeutic aspects of yoga. He also gave mantra and karma sannyasa initiation along with spiritual names to aspirants.

On 26th January, Sri Swamiji arrived at Rocklyn in Victoria after a brief stopover at the Satyananda ashram in Canberra. The next day he lit a lamp, inaugurating the newly built Satyananda ashram at Rocklyn and gave an inspiring satsang on 'The Importance of Ashram Life'. The calm and serene atmosphere of this ashram built in the wilderness will prove very conducive for spiritual aspirants. The ashram has enough space to accommodate two hundred and fifty people at a time.

Sri Swamiji gave satsangs on different aspects of yoga during the ongoing eight-day yoga seminar at Rocklyn ashram. He gave spiritual names to aspirants and also initiated many into mantra and karma sannyasa. After inaugurating a kriya yoga course at the ashram on 31st January, Sri Swamiji left for Canberra.

On 1st February, Sri Swamiji gave an interview to correspondents from the *Canberra Times* and other Australian newspapers at the Canberra Press Club. He also gave a special interview to the Channel 7 TV Network. After initiating many aspirants into mantra and karma sannyasa, he returned to Mangrove Mountain on the 2nd.

On 5th February, Jan Similton of the ABC radio network interviewed Sri Swamiji for the 'City Extra' program and this interview was broadcast all over Australia. On 12th February, Sri Swamiji delivered a public lecture in Gosford.

Thereafter Sri Swamiji went to Queensland where he gave satsangs and lectures from 17th to 20th February, and also participated in a yoga seminar in Brisbane. After giving a public lecture on the Gold Coast, Sri Swamiji proceeded to New South Wales, where he gave public lectures in Lillian

Rock, Nimbin, Bellingen, Taree, Newcastle and Sydney from 21st to 29th February.

Sri Swamiji's tour of Australia proved to be a grand success. Thousands of yoga practitioners and spiritual aspirants attended his programs. At every place he visited, he initiated hundreds of aspirants into sannyasa, karma sannyasa, mantra, spiritual name and symbol. Thirty-six aspirants took karma sannyasa at Mangrove Mountain, twenty-seven in Lillian Rock, sixteen in Nimbin, eleven in Bellingen, ten in Newcastle and Taree, sixty in Rocklyn, twelve in Canberra, twenty-seven in Brisbane, sixteen in Cairns and thirty in Hobart.

In March, Sri Swamiji gave satsangs and public lectures in Auckland and Lake Whangapai (New Zealand), Launceston and Hobart (Tasmania), Perth (Western Australia), Rocklyn (Victoria), Alice Springs (Northern Territory) and Adelaide (South Australia). He also inaugurated a kriya yoga course at the Satyananda ashram in Sydney.

Swami Niranjan inaugurated Ramayana sammelans organized by the Jamalpur Railway Workshop Ramayana committee at Kalyanpur Railway Station on 19th February and at Bariarpur railway station on 21st February.

On 19th February, the sacred day of Sivaratri, a special program of bhajans, kirtans and satsang was organized at Ganga Darshan. Presenting malas and spiritual names sent by Sri Swamiji from Australia, Swami Niranjan initiated nine aspirants into poorna sannyasa and ten into karma sannyasa, in front of the sacred sacrificial fire.

Two courses on 'Effective Business Management' were conducted at Ganga Darshan in the month of May.

On 30th May, Sri Swamiji arrived in southern France, where he inaugurated a Satyananda Yoga Centre in Toulon on the 31st. He delivered a public lecture on 'Discipline and Freedom through Yoga' at the Pablo Neruda Hall, Nimes, on 1st June. On the 2nd he inaugurated a kriya yoga course and gave inspiring satsangs on different aspects of yoga.

On 8th June, Sri Swamiji left for the beautiful island, Des Ambies (Cote d'Azur) to conduct a five-day seminar. This

Mediterranean island is surrounded by pine trees on all sides. Here Sri Swamiji gave satsangs on the relevance and importance of tantra in daily life and initiated many aspirants into mantra. On 12th June, he gave poorna sannyasa initiations as well. Sri Swamiji's programs in southern France were very successful.

On 13th June, Sri Swamiji left for Paris, where he received a very warm welcome from devotees and disciples. On 15th June, Sri Swamiji began a three-part lecture series on 'The Indian Scriptures and their Practical Application in Daily life'. In these lectures, at the Sivananda Ashram, he expounded on the finer points of the Vedas, tantra shastras and other prominent schools of Indian philosophy and thought.

Presenting a thorough and insightful analysis of the Greek school of philosophy and its effects upon western religion and civilization, Sri Swamiji showed how this philosophy led to the birth of a culture and society where material and spiritual life were separate from each other, whereas the teachings inherent in the Vedas led to the development of a beautiful way of life in which worldly life, religious beliefs and spiritual aspirations were blended into a harmonious whole. The lectures that Sri Swamiji delivered in this program were matchless in their lucidity, originality and clarity of thought, and clearly reflected the innate genius of his personality.

From 18th to 24th June, Sri Swamiji delivered many public lectures on different aspects of yoga and tantra. On 18th June, he gave a lecture on 'The Spiritual Quest in Married Life' at the Centre de l'Homme et de la Connaissance, Paris. On the 19th, he participated in a private program of the Freemasons as an honoured guest. The subject of his speech was 'Yoga, the Timely Gift of India to the Western World'. On the 20th and 21st, he gave satsangs to huge gatherings at the Satyananda Ashram, Paris.

Sri Swamiji visited the famous clinic of Dr Daussy and Prof Cloarec at Tenon Hospital, Paris, on 22nd June. These eminent doctors are world-renowned specialists on heart

disease. Sri Swamiji gave a lecture on 'Yoga, Medicine of the Future' at the conference hall of Tenon Hospital. In the evening he delivered a lecture on 'Recent Scientific Research into Yoga' at the Sorbonne, the famous French university. In his lecture Sri Swamiji informed his audience of the reasons that had inspired the Russians to send an Indian yoga practitioner into space.

On 23rd June, Sri Swamiji participated in a round table discussion on 'Yoga and Education in the Future' with members of the Education Department and teachers of Condorcet College, Paris.

On 25th June, Sri Swamiji went to Chamarande, France, where he had been invited by Mr Gerard Klitz on behalf of the European Yoga Union. Sri Swamiji conducted a five-day course at the Chamarande yoga university. In his lectures on yoga and tantra, he focused specifically on the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. A highlight of the program was the release of the French translation (titled 'Liberte') of *Four Chapters on Freedom*, his masterful English commentary on the *Yoga Sutras*. The book was translated by Swami Yogabhakti and published and printed by the European Yoga Union under the direction of Mr Gerard Klitz. The Yoga Federation has recommended this book as a textbook for the curriculum of yoga teachers all over Europe. Before leaving France, Sri Swamiji initiated seven aspirants into sannyasa.

On 30th June, Sri Swamiji left for Greece to conduct the Guru Poornima celebrations in Thessaloniki. This was the first time that Guru Poornima had been celebrated in Europe in Sri Swamiji's physical presence. A three-day program was organized on the eve of Guru Poornima in which sannyasins, devotees, disciples and well-wishers from Greece and all parts of the world participated. On 13th July, the sacred day of Guru Poornima, thousands of devotees had darshan of Gurudev Swami Satyananda Saraswati and received his blessings. Many aspirants were initiated into mantra and karma sannyasa. For the European devotees it was an experience to remember and treasure.

A special Guru Poornima sadhana shivir was organized at Ganga Darshan as well from 10th to 12th July. Sri Chandrashekhar Khan sang beautiful bhajans on the evening of the 10th. On 11th and 12th evenings, discourses on the *Ramayana* were conducted by Smt Krishna Devi and Sri Rajesh Mohammed. On the 12th, bhajans and kirtans started early in the morning, followed by havan and paduka pooja thereafter. More than three thousand people participated in the program which turned out to be a grand success.

On 14th July, Sri Swamiji returned to France from Greece. There he conducted a seven-day seminar for yoga teachers which had been organized by Swami Yogabhakti in the inspiring environs of Chateau Theyrargue, an eight-hundred-year-old castle in the south of France.

The tattwa shuddhi classes of the seminar were conducted by Swami Satyasangananda. This was the first presentation of tattwa shuddhi in Europe. During the course of the seminar, Sri Swamiji gave many satsangs on the philosophy of yoga and tantra and its application in daily life.

Sri Swamiji left for central France on 23rd July, where he participated in a fifteen-day seminar organized by Swamis Devatmananda and Pragyananda at L'Hermitage, a rural ashram. The participants were mainly students of DIPS (Diffusions of Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati), which imparts training to yoga teachers. Sri Swamiji gave satsangs every day, covering a broad range of topics, including the Upanishads, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, Vedas and Puranas. Three aspirants received poorna sannyasa initiation during the seminar.

Thereafter Sri Swamiji travelled to Neuchatel, Switzerland, at the invitation of Siru Nainani and presided over a sadhana course there. On 18th August, he went to Geneva to participate in a seminar on swara yoga, samkhya, tantra and vedanta. In this seminar, Sri Swamiji gave clear and lucid discourses on certain topics in yoga which people had very little knowledge of hitherto.

After initiating three aspirants into karma sannyasa, Sri Swamiji left for Delhi, and arrived in Munger on 29th August.

Sadhana courses, teacher training courses and health management courses are being conducted regularly at Ganga Darshan. The ashram sannyasins also travel outside to conduct camps and shivirs.

Sri Swamiji inaugurated a Hindi-medium kriya yoga and tattwa shuddhi course on 14th October and gave an inspiring satsang to the participants.

On 6th November Swami Niranjana inaugurated the English-medium kriya yoga and tattwa shuddhi course. Swami Anandananda came with a group of devotees from Italy to participate in the course. Swami Sanyam also brought a group from England. During November-December, Sri Swamiji gave poorna sannyasa initiation to four aspirants, karma sannyasa to ninety aspirants and mantra to many hundreds.

### **Dawn of the computer age in the ashram**

On the auspicious occasion of Vijayadashami in October 1984, two computers were installed at Ganga Darshan, putting the little town of Munger on the computer map of India. These computers will be used to compile research data on yoga practices as well as the lectures of Sri Swamiji and other material culled from the ancient tantric and yoga related literature.

### **Activities during 1985**

Swami Niranjana conducted a satsang program at the Dhanbad ashram from 3rd to 6th January. Thereafter Swami Niranjana's programs were organized at the residence of Sri Sanjeev Kumar, the ISM auditorium, the Dhanbad Lions Club, the Coal Bhavan auditorium, the Sijua club, the Digladih club, the Sudamadih colliery, the Moolidih colliery, the women's satsang association, the Gujarati Samaj (Jharia), Agrasen Bhavan (Jharia), the Pistodevi Vidyamandir, the Kustaur club, the Golukdih colliery, the Kujima colliery and Saraidhela.

On 24th January, Swami Niranjana inaugurated a shivir in Kalyanpur, Munger. On 3rd February, he inaugurated a relief camp for the blind in Suryagarha. On the 10th

he participated in the annual celebrations of Saraswati Shishu Mandir, Munger, and on the 17th he inaugurated a naturopathy and yoga centre on the premises of Bal Bharati Vidyamandir in Munger.

On Basant Panchami, the Foundation Day of BSY was commemorated with a three-day program of bhajans, kirtans and satsangs. A feast was also organized for the poor and the destitute.

Sri Swamiji initiated eight Indian aspirants into poorna sannyasa on 17th February, the holy day of Sivaratri. He also initiated twenty-five aspirants into karma sannyasa and many others into mantra.

On 24th February, Sri Swamiji, accompanied by Swami Satyasangananda, embarked on a trip to England. They arrived in London on the 26th. There Sri Swamiji delivered a lecture on meditation at a workshop organized by Antonia Boylo on 2nd March, and from 8th to 10th March he presided over a seminar on yoga and tantra organized by Swami Pragyamurti at Conway Hall. Sri Swami's lectures in this seminar focused on the practical aspects of tantric meditation in relation to body, mind and consciousness. Sri Swamiji initiated thirteen aspirants into karma sannyasa and one into poorna sannyasa during the course of his stay in London.

On 26th March Sri Swamiji returned to Ganga Darshan for two months. He had established two public institutions, Sivananda Math and the Yoga Research Foundation, in October 1984, and now these institutions have been duly registered. A tri-monthly magazine called *Sivananda Math* has started coming out under the auspices of Sivananda Math, which is also providing scholarships to deserving students and books and stationery to underprivileged children.

This year Sri Swamiji decided to celebrate Guru Poornima at Satyananda Ashram, Athens. He left on 22nd June for Greece to preside over the three-day program of sadhana and satsang, accompanied by Swami Satyasangananda.

On the way to Athens, Sri Swamiji stopped in Bombay and gave darshan and satsang to his Bombay devotees. He

left for Athens on 24th June, where he was warmly received by his Greek devotees and disciples. Sri Swamiji went to see the new ashram in Paiania, which is spread over an area of ten hectares. The peaceful ambience of this place provided an ideal setting for European devotees to take advantage of Sri Swamiji's presence and satsangs.

The Guru Poornima celebrations started on 29th June 1985 with a stirring discourse from Sri Swamiji. Swami Yogashakti from Colombia presented bhajans and kirtans while Swamis Satyasangananda and Devatmananda gave discourses on the guru-disciple relationship. In his satsangs, Sri Swamiji shed light on yoga, tantra and other aspects of Indian philosophy.

On 2nd July, the auspicious day of Guru Poornima, Guru paduka pooja was conducted with great devotion and reverence by thousands of devotees from Greece, Europe, USA and England. It was a wonderful opportunity for western disciples to witness this sacred event.

Guru paduka pooja was conducted at Ganga Darshan, Munger, as well with great joy and fervour. More than two thousand devotees participated in the program, which included bhajans, kirtans, *Ramayana* chanting and satsang.

Sri Swamiji inaugurated a tattwa shuddhi course in Greece on 3rd July, which was conducted by Swami Satyasangananda.

On 9th July, Sri Swamiji travelled to Antwerp, Belgium, at the invitation of his old disciple, Sri Ram Senon, the director of the Raja Yoga Vedanta Institute. During his stay in Antwerp, Sri Swamiji lectured extensively on pranayama, mudra, bandha and kundalini yoga. He also conducted a special yoga nidra class which was broadcast by the television network. He initiated forty-four aspirants into karma sannyasa and seventeen into poorna sannyasa.

On 14th July Sri Swamiji returned to Athens where he initiated many devotees into mantra, karma sannyasa and poorna sannyasa. He left Athens for India on 19th July. He stayed in Bombay for three days, where his programs had



been arranged by the members of the newly constituted Satyananda Yoga Centre. Sri Swamiji gave satsangs and lectures in many different places in Bombay. On 23rd July he left for Delhi and on the 24th he returned to Munger.

On 18th October, Sri Swamiji went to Dhanbad where he met devotees and gave satsang. He arrived in Novamundi on the 19th in the private plane of Sri R.N. Sharma, the vice-president of the Tata Iron and Steel Company. Sri Swamiji was accorded a traditional welcome by students of the TISCO primary and middle schools. After addressing a mammoth gathering at the Novamundi Yoga Kendra, Sri Swamiji spoke to the participants of a kriya yoga course conducted by the swamis of Bihar School of Yoga. In the evening, he delivered a public lecture at the Novamundi Club.

Sri Swamiji left for Bombay on 21st October at the invitation of the Satyananda Yoga Centre. During his stay in Bombay, Sri Swamiji gave three public lectures on kundalini yoga at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. In his lectures, Sri Swamiji shed light on little known facets of tantra. These lectures were attended by people from all sections of Bombay society. On 29th October, Sri Swamiji was invited to speak at the Homi Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Trombay.

Sri Swamiji gave daily satsangs at the residence of Sri and Smt Munshi, at Chateau Windsor. He also gave mantra diksha and karma sannyasa to many aspirants.

In November Sri Swamiji returned to Munger, where he gave satsang to participants of the kriya yoga and tattwa shuddhi courses. He initiated seven Indian participants into poorna sannyasa and many aspirants into mantra. In November, Swami Pragyamurti brought a group from England for a kriya yoga course. Swami Anandananda also brought a group from Italy for ashram life and karma yoga.

Sri Swamiji was receiving invitations for visits and programs from different parts of the country and the world. He sent the following message to all his devotees and disciples:

### **Sri Swamiji's message**

I have been receiving many letters from disciples from time to time, and visiting groups have also asked me for a visit. Of course I would come as I have a deep affinity for my disciples and sannyasins whom I consider as my very own. But for the moment this is not possible.

However, keeping everyone's wish in mind, I have decided to send Swami Niranjan on my behalf. Although I will not be there in person, my spirit, heart and mind will travel to you in Niranjan.

Keeping this in view, all sannyasins, karma sannyasins, disciples, devotees and friends should be informed of his visit. Swami Niranjan goes there not just as my representative but, in fact, as my soul, without a difference.

I hope my message is clear.

### **Activities during 1986**

In January 1986, programs were arranged in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra. Sri Swamiji sent Swami Niranjan and four other swamis to conduct these programs. Swami Niranjan and the swamis accompanying him left Munger on 5th January and reached Calcutta on 6th January. After conducting satsang in Calcutta, they arrived in Raigarh on the morning of the 7th. A hectic program of satsangs, classes and initiations had been arranged in Raigarh. A public lecture was also organized in the evening.

Swami Niranjan reached Bhilai on 9th January, where a four-day convention had been organized from the 9th to the 12th. Swami Niranjan inaugurated the convention on the evening of the 9th with the lighting of a ceremonial lamp and garlanding of Sri Swamiji's portrait. Bhajans, kirtans, satsangs, asana, pranayama and yoga nidra classes and question-answer sessions were conducted throughout the convention. At the special request of the people of Nandgram, Swami Niranjan agreed to visit Nandgram as well.

On the morning of the 12th, Swami Niranjan travelled from Bhilai to Nandgram by car. The people of Nandgram

had started gathering at the ashram from early morning itself to catch a glimpse of their beloved Niranjan. As soon as Swami Niranjan arrived at the ashram, he was accorded a tumultuous welcome. First of all he paid respects at the samadhi sthal of Swami Satyavratanaanda and then gave mantra diksha to forty-three aspirants in the main hall of the ashram. More than two thousand people had gathered in the ashram by now, and more were coming. The old people in the crowd were trying their level best to inch forward and get a better look at their dear Niranjan. Addressing the gathering, Swami Niranjan said, "I have not come here to give darshan, rather I have come to give the message of Poojya Gurudev and to receive your blessings and good wishes." After meeting everyone, Swami Niranjan returned to Bhilai at 11 am, where a busy program of lectures, initiations, meetings and press conferences continued till the 12th.

On 13th January, Swami Niranjan arrived in Raipur by car. He gave a press conference followed by programs at the ayurvedic college and the women's college. The Raipur centre of All India Radio recorded a special interview, after which he addressed a very large gathering of aspirants and devotees. After giving mantra initiations on the morning of the 14th, Swami Niranjan went to St Joseph's church where he delivered a lecture on 'The Importance of Yoga in the Modern Age'. After giving discourses and interviews throughout the day, Swami Niranjan and his group left for Sambalpur that night.

They reached Sambalpur on the morning of 15th January. A three-day Utkal Yoga Convention had been organized from the 16th to the 18th. Bhajans, kirtans, initiations, satsangs and question-answer sessions were conducted throughout the convention. Smt Krishna Devi discoursed on the *Ramayana* on all three days of the convention. On the 17th, Swami Niranjan gave a public lecture at the Burla Engineering College. After the conclusion of the convention on the 18th, the group departed for Bombay.

Arriving in Bombay on the 19th, Swami Niranjan gave a public lecture on 'Yoga for Better Health' in Thane and

distributed certificates to the participants of a yoga teacher training course. From the 20th to the 25th he conducted classes on chidakasha dharana at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Many people had an opportunity to have a private interview with him as well. On 21st January, he delivered a public lecture on 'The Raja Yoga of Patanjali' at the ISKCON auditorium, Juhu. On the 22nd, he lectured on 'Yoga Therapy' at the Bombay West Rotary Club. On the 23rd, Swami Niranjan spoke on 'Stress Management through Yoga' to the workers and officers of Gestkin Williams Company situated in Bhandup, and taught them simple and effective yoga practices. On 24th January, he gave a lecture on 'Yoga, the Science of Today and the Culture of Tomorrow' at the Tata Auditorium. On 25th January, an asana class was conducted for children at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan under Swami Niranjan's guidance. All these programs were conducted by Satyananda Yoga Centre, Bombay. Thereafter, Swami Niranjan left for Gondia on the night of 25th January.

He reached Gondia on the afternoon of 26th January, where he was accorded a very warm welcome. Thereafter a busy program of satsangs, initiations, interviews and question-answer sessions followed. Subsequently he returned to Munger via Calcutta on the 29th.

Sri Swamiji went to Delhi on 5th February. From there he proceeded to Amravati, Maharashtra, to inaugurate and preside over a three-day national yoga convention. Sri Swamiji inaugurated the convention on the 7th with an impassioned speech on 'The Significance of Yoga in the All-round Development of an Individual'. On 8th and 9th February he gave satsangs and met yoga teachers and students from all over India who had come to attend the convention. On 10th February, Sri Swamiji returned to Delhi and then to Munger.

On 1st March, Sri Swamiji travelled to Patna where he inaugurated a rally for children from the eastern states of India. The rally had been organized by the All India Shishu Sangam. Sri Swamiji lit the ceremonial lamp, signifying the inauguration of the rally. Thereafter children from

Meghalaya provided a guard of honour for Sri Swamiji. In his speech, Sri Swamiji exhorted the children to learn and know about their rich cultural heritage. He returned to Munger on 2nd March.

Sri Swamiji continued to give satsangs to students and devotees at Ganga Darshan. From December 1985 to March 1986, hundreds of people took mantra initiation. Sixty-eight aspirants took karma sannyasa initiation and three poorna sannyasa.

Programs were arranged in Bombay, Lonavala, Kutch and Bhuj to which Sri Swamiji sent Swami Niranjana. Swami Niranjana arrived in Dhanbad on 5th May, where he conducted a program of satsang and mantra initiation. Thereafter he visited Disergarh and Sankatoria on the 7th and 8th and conducted a one-day stress management course for the officers of Eastern Coalfields.

Swami Niranjana arrived in Bombay on 9th May. On the 10th he was invited to the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Trombay, to give a lecture on 'Yoga in Daily Life'. On 11th May, he went to Lonavala to conduct a yoga retreat for students and teachers of the Satyananda Yoga Centre, Bombay. Besides the daily classes and satsangs, he also expounded on different topics from the Vedas and Upanishads. Many aspirants received mantra initiation at the end of the retreat.

Swami Niranjana returned to Bombay on the 18th. There he conducted a three-day shivir on Prana Vidya organized by the Satyananda Yoga Centre. His various other engagements included a lecture titled 'Harmony to Harmony' at the annual Rotary Club convention at the Taj Hotel, a stress management course at Tata and Rose Co. Ltd and an inspiring satsang at the residence of Pratibha Munshi.

Swami Niranjana travelled by air to Bhuj, Kutch, on 19th May, where he conducted classes, initiated aspirants into mantra, gave press and private interviews and addressed members of the Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants' Association. He also gave a stirring speech to officers and soldiers of the Indian Army, Air Force and

Border Security Force. He gave daily evening satsangs at Shanti Niketan as well.

On 26th May, Swami Niranjan returned to Bombay and then returned to Munger via Calcutta on the 30th.

This year the Guru Poornima Mahotsav was celebrated at Ganga Darshan. A special sadhana shivir was organized from 18th to 20th July, which included asana and pranayama classes, bhajans, kirtans, satsangs and chanting of the *Gita* and Upanishads. Dr Manas Vishwas from Datia, Madhya Pradesh, discoursed on the *Ramayana* every evening.

Bhajans, kirtans and mantra chanting started at 5 am on 21st July, the auspicious day of Guru Poornima. Guru paduka pooja began at 6 am, in which more than three thousand people participated. Paduka pooja was conducted in the main building, while Sri Swamiji remained in the kutir. At the special request of devotees, they were allowed to have darshan of Sri Swamiji and pay their respects from a distance. The devotees would form a queue after paduka pooja and after paying their respects to Sri Swamiji in the kutir, they would leave into the returning queue. This went on until 11 am. In the morning, Sri Swamiji had initiated many devotees into mantra and sannyasa. About fifty or sixty people had taken karma sannyasa earlier in July. Pooja, satsang and the rest of the program were conducted in the second floor hall of the newly constructed main building. The entire event was very inspiring and uplifting.

Sri Swamiji stayed at Ganga Darshan for a while to execute some special projects. He had established Sivananda Math in memory of his guru, Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, whose birth centenary was soon to be celebrated worldwide. Swami Sivananda was an embodiment of love, service, compassion and mercy. Sivananda Math is a registered charitable body dedicated to promoting these lofty ideals of Swami Sivananda. Glory to the great guru and his equally great disciple!

Since its inception, Sivananda Math has been giving scholarships, books, notebooks and other educational

materials to poor and needy students of Munger district. This is an extensive project undertaken as per the objectives of this institution to help deserving students in every possible way. Necessary medicines are also being distributed free of cost to needy patients.

On 24th December 1985, clothes were distributed to men, women and children in the disturbed area of Lakshmipur, Munger, which had recently witnessed incidents of arson, bloodshed and robbery. Sri Swamiji first informed the district authorities about his plan and after receiving the particulars of affected families from them, he had a detailed list prepared about what to give and to whom. According to that list, bundles of clothes were packed for distribution to each of the two hundred and sixteen families. Swami Niranjan, together with seven swamis and twenty-two local volunteers from Sivananda Math, were sent to distribute the clothes to the needy families. Two families were also given kitchen utensils. Sivananda Math had received these clothes as a gift from the devotees of Singapore.

Sri Swamiji is planning to induct an ambulance shortly which will serve as a mobile hospital of Sivananda Math. The ambulance will take doctors, nurses and medicines to remote rural areas where patients will be examined and given medicines. Every other fortnight the ambulance will carry veterinary doctors who will take care of rural livestock. There are also plans to open schools in remote rural areas. The chief minister of Bihar, Sri Bhagwat Jha Azad, visited the ashram and had fruitful discussions with Sri Swamiji. He was quite pleased to learn about Sri Swamiji's programs and plans and promised to give land and teachers for the upcoming schools. Sri Swamiji's mission is growing by leaps and bounds indeed.

### **Swami Sivananda's birth centenary**

Swami Sivananda's birth centenary will fall on 8th September 1987. The Guru Poornima of 1987 will therefore be celebrated as the centenary Guru Poornima. Devotees and

disciples will arrive from all parts of India and the world. The organizers are expecting up to ten thousand people. Sri Swamiji has decided to have a three-day satsang shivir on the occasion. The program will include daily chanting of *Saundarya Lahari* and *Bhagavad Gita* at 8 am, followed by chanting of the *Ramayana* and Upanishads at 2 pm. Swami Sivananda was very fond of music, and so music will occupy a prominent place in his centenary celebrations. Renowned exponents of music are vying with each other to perform during the program. Three hour long music soirees will be conducted on all three days of the program.

Sri Swamiji has a clear blueprint in mind for the research centre as well. He knows exactly what to do and where to do it. Computerized machines will be brought in, and the rooms have been designed keeping them in mind. After the preliminary research work has been completed, a seminar of doctors and therapists will be convened. The research work has been going on for quite a few years now, and reports and files from various doctors have already started coming in.

The library is quite big, with one hundred and one large-sized almirahs filled with books on a vast array of subjects. Besides English and Hindi books, the library also has books in many other languages. Sri Swamiji has a grand vision in mind and his multifarious activities extend to many areas and sections of society.

“Karma yoga is the real yoga,” is Sri Swamiji’s dictum which his disciples have taken to heart. They are marching on the path of karma yoga with courage and conviction. Sri Swamiji has indeed given a new direction for human evolution.

Bhumandaleshwar Swami Sivananda undertook rigorous sadhana and transferred all its accumulated merits to his superhuman disciple. He kept Satyam, an ocean of knowledge and wisdom, hidden in his bosom for twelve years and then sent him away with the mandate of *bahujan hitaaya, bahujan sukhaaya* – to work for the benefit and happiness of many.



Having received the blessings of his guru to become a world conqueror, Satyam embraced the lifestyle of a parivrajaka and set off on the path illumined by the soul force of his omnipotent guru. Walking through unknown places, moving among unknown people, he faced many trials and tribulations, but he kept on moving. Soon his efforts started bearing fruit. He was showered with success wherever he went. *'Wherefrom thorns on the path now, my path is bedecked with flowers . . .'*

In June 1957, he received hints and directions from divine powers. He received another mandate in Badrinath in 1961. On his return from Badrinath, he received the blessings and commands of his guru and he vowed to fulfil the divine mandate he had received. *Yoga will be the culture of tomorrow* – with this bold proclamation, Sri Swamiji founded the International Yoga Fellowship. After the mahasamadhi of his guru, Sri Swamiji lit an eternal flame in his memory and began fulfilling his mandate in right earnest. After rigorous tapasya and sadhana he established himself as a paramahansa, and began spreading his mission to all corners of the globe.

The systematic yoga training imparted by Sri Swamiji, the numerous yoga ashrams and centres established in India and abroad, the yoga conventions, the successful world tours, the ongoing research into various diseases – these are all shining testimonials to the progress and success of the yoga movement. His books have sold hundreds of thousands of copies and many more are being continuously printed. His works have been translated into many Indian and foreign languages and published all over the globe. The twin monthlies *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* have been published regularly for the last twenty-one years, and at the request of earnest seekers, the entire material for the advanced sadhana of kriya yoga was serially published in the periodical *Kriya* over a period of three years in both Hindi and English.

Sri Vasudev Sharma, an employee of the Yoga Vedanta Forest University Press, Rishikesh, had said these words on the thirty-first birthday of Sri Swamiji:

O pillar of Ananda Kutir, this giant edifice that soars majestically on the banks of the holy Ganga is beaming with pride on this auspicious day, for it has received the support of a divine pillar with a heart purer than the Ganga, a character sturdier and steadier than the Himalayas and speech sweeter than the sweetest honey . . .

These heartfelt sentiments were expressed in 1954, but the words ring true even today with Ganga Darshan replacing Ananda Kutir . . .

Sri Swamiji wrote an essay titled, 'I am a Sannyasin' in the beginning of 1954. Even today he harbours the very same ideals and inspiration in his personality:

### **I am a sannyasin**

Man conquered the celestial realms, crossed enormous seas, measured the immense expanse of the sky, explored the depths of cavernous oceans, unravelled the myriad secrets of nature, adopted various philosophies and religions, suppressed his sufferings and sorrows, joined the two shores of birth and death with the chain of life, discovered divinity and realized the underlying basis of eternal life. He gained everything, lost everything, saw everything. Yet man is incomplete. His desires are unfulfilled and a never-ending want haunts him continuously. Death is the end and birth the beginning of the expedition called life.

Death fulfils life and life fulfils death. Neither dharma, nor karma, yoga, mantra or tantra can make life whole and complete. Even the completeness touted by a yogic and spiritual life is like a barren woman's educated and well-off (i.e. non-existent) son.

This problem persists even now. No one has come forward to solve it yet. Yogis, jnanis, mahatmas, ascetics and scientists – all have tried but failed. We either lost ourselves in our individual pursuit of the meaning of life, or we sank in the materialistic temptations of the world or

we forgot everything in the fleeting glimpses of spiritual bliss. Someone searched for the atman, another looked for the paramatman. Someone realized God, another got lost in the trappings of the world. Someone set out to discover the infinite cosmos, another dived deep beneath the oceans to discover its secrets, and yet another reached out to the edge of space. Someone searched for peace while another raised a storm. Yet no one has achieved a comprehensive, all-encompassing understanding of life to date.

The development of life remained confined to a few areas. A Hindu could not become a Muslim, neither a Muslim a Hindu. Neither a grihastha became a sannyasin, nor a sannyasin a grihastha. Someone said that the world was real, another claimed it was unreal. Someone said, "All is One," another said, "Many," while another said, "Nothing exists in the first place." The more we searched, the more we lost. The more knowledge we gained, the less knowledgeable we became. Even after ages of searching by a galaxy of yogis, jnanis, saints and mahatmas, the secret of life could not be unravelled. But today we have to resolve this complexity.

We have understood that life is sacred; it is not a curse or a sin, rather a beautiful boon. The yogis, bhaktas, scientists, philosophers and realized masters tried to improve the quality of life. But what was the result? The true nature of life became veiled, didn't it? We must remove the veils imposed upon life by religious dogmas and scriptural injunctions and wash away the layers of colours put on life since ages. Then and only then shall we see life in its original glory. Life is simple and pure, sacred and unified. From the vast to the tiny, life is ingrained everywhere. It is real and omnipresent. The coverings imposed upon it are mere pomp and show, nothing else.

Let my life go on as it is, in the direction it yearns to follow. Keep your knowledge, your philosophy, your spirituality, your science, your social conduct, your

religion. Let my life flow splendidly as a child's. Let me fly like the carefree birds, let me remain innocent and unknowing. I don't want your wisdom or knowledge. I don't need your scholarship or your books. I wish to roam in the jungles and mountains. Let me sing along with the birds, do not stop me. Let me run on paths covered with dry leaves, feeling them crunch under my feet as I run among them. Do not stop me. Let me gaze at the wondrous scenes of nature that unfold at sunrise. Let me live on the leaves of the forest, the water of the streams and the air of the vast sky. Keep your civilization, your pride, your reputation and your religion. Don't tie me down, let me go wherever I want to. Do not bind me with the fetters of social norms and rules, do not misguide me with your religious beliefs, do not defeat me with your scientific arguments. Do not lead me astray.

*I am a bird of the endless sky  
I am the ceaseless flow of nectar  
I am tranquil eternal bliss  
I am the luminous star of joys  
Go away tears, grief and sorrow,  
the prison of pain has been destroyed.  
Wherefrom thorns on the path now,  
my path is bedecked with flowers.  
I am a sannyasin, I am a sannyasin . . .*

How true are the words of this sannyasin, born with spiritual samskaras acquired over several births. A diamond is born in the guise of dirt-covered coal. If discovered by an expert jeweller, its lustre and radiance spreads throughout the world, otherwise no one even knows about it. This unique diamond called Satyam began to spread its light as soon as it emerged from the mine, but not many noticed. Destiny brought this diamond to the doorstep of a jeweller who recognized his worth immediately and began to cut and polish the rough edges of this precious stone. In twelve years the diamond acquired such shine and lustre that it lit up the entire

Ananda Kutir. Gradually the light began to spread outside the ashram as well. The guru gave his choicest blessings to his radiant disciple, and sent him out to conquer the world. Now this sun-like disciple has to complete his mission and rid this world of its darkness, without becoming enmeshed in the fetters of friendship or enmity with anyone . . .

The natural beauty of his native Kumaon, the wealth and prestige of his father, the warmth and respect of his friends – Pallav had everything, yet none of these could bind him. He was not meant to be confined within the four walls of his house. Like a free bird, he left everything to soar in the vast sky . . . This happened in 1942.

Now it is 1988. Forty-six years have elapsed. He is no longer the boyish Dharmendra, but the lion Satyam whose roaring proclamation of the message of yoga is banishing the darkness of ignorance from every nook and corner of the world. Half a century later his feeling of dispassion and non-attachment is still the same. He has created a rich legacy Sivananda Ashram, the seven-storeyed Ganga Darshan, Sivananda Math, Yoga Research Foundation and much more, but can this modern-day Bhagiratha, who brought the Yoga-Ganga within the reach of the common man, himself remain confined within Ganga Darshan?

Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the messiah of yoga, finally left Ganga Darshan on 8th August 1988, to roam everywhere like a free bird, to thank the divine forces for everything he had achieved and to seek their blessings and guidance for his future course of life.

His complete and total renunciation echoed the sentiments he had expressed almost half a century ago: “Let my life flow like the innocent currents of my childhood. Let me remain ignorant, I don’t want your wisdom or knowledge. I want to soar high like the carefree birds of the azure sky. Let me sing along with these birds. Do not stop me, do not curtail me . . .”

O Satyam! Out of the flowers of your love, affection, compassion, wisdom and knowledge that dropped down

during your innumerable satsangs, discourses and talks have I created this little 'garland'. There is nothing that I can really call mine in this garland; whatever there is belongs to you. I offer this insignificant garland at your lotus feet with a feeling of both hesitation as well as unbridled joy . . .

*Let my life go on as it is,  
In the direction it yearns to follow.  
Keep your knowledge, your philosophy, your spirituality,  
Your science, your social conduct, your religion.  
Let my life flow splendidly as a child's,  
Let me fly like the birds,  
Let me remain innocent and unknowing.*

*I don't need your knowledge.  
I love to roam in the jungle.  
Let me sing with the birds, don't stop me.  
Let me laugh in the flaring garden of life.  
Let me run amongst the rustling leaves.  
Let me glimpse nature at sunrise,  
Let forest leaves, spring water, clear air sustain me.*

*Keep your civilization, your pride, your reputation;  
Let me go wherever I want to  
Far, far away, beyond the horizon  
Where earthly rays do not penetrate  
Where worldly ways cannot reach.*

*Don't bind me by your social rules.  
Don't influence me with your religions,  
Don't drag me down with your conventions.  
Leave me alone.  
Let me be.*

# Culmination of the Seer's Vision



O dazzling sun of Ganga Darshan!

Walking on the path leading to eternal and infinite light,  
guided by the radiance of your luminous Self, I bow in deep  
gratitude at your holy feet. In your own words:

*I am a bird of the endless sky  
I am the ceaseless flow of nectar  
I am tranquil eternal bliss  
I am the luminous star of joys.  
Go away, tears, grief and sorrow  
The prison of pain has been destroyed.  
Wherefrom thorns on the path now,  
My path is bedecked with flowers.*





**B** *inu hari kripa milahi nahin santa* – it is impossible to come in contact with a saint without the grace of God. This statement by Tulsidas is exemplified by my own life. Great saints and bhaktas keep appearing in this world in every age to tell us, teach us and show us the truth.

The desire, permission and instruction to write something about the life-history of this jewel amongst saints had always been there. I had Gurudev's inspiration and blessings with me as well. Whatever Gurudev says always comes true. This is something I have seen and experienced at every step of my life. Together with Gurudev, it was the support and encouragement of his foremost friend and disciple, Satyavratji, who was my protector, guide and fellow traveller on this journey of life, that enabled me to easily navigate the tricky currents and whirlpools of family and social life.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it was the result of our auspicious karmas from past lives that led us to the feet of great saints early on in this life. We were extremely fortunate to receive the blessings of Swami Sivananda and the caring protection and companionship of Swami Satyananda. As I reminisce about those early days, I get lost in a flood of memories. The events and happenings since 1956 always remain on my mental screen. Satyavratji had always been interested in books and magazines. He would always buy and order various books, read them and distribute them to

others as well. Our almirahs were always full of books. In 1956, we received an entire set of Swami Sivananda's books. Different magazines and periodicals also started coming in every month. The task of giving, receiving and managing this big collection of reading material fell on my shoulders.

After 1956, following Satyavratji's suggestion I got a separate almirah for myself in which I kept Swami Sivananda's Hindi books, Swami Satyananda's books, files containing his writings, transcripts of his satsangs, his diaries, his letters and other magazines and books connected with him. With the construction of the ashram in 1971, Satyavratji shifted our personal library to the ashram, but my mini-library remained with me. After Sri Swamiji's satsangs and discourses, the two of us would often sit down with him and have conversations with him on many different subjects. If Sri Swamiji ever talked about himself, Satyavratji would immediately jot it down in shorthand. Later on I would transcribe his notes and save the matter in a file.

Once Sri Swamiji's books started coming out, I also started to write with his inspiration. Compiling and publishing a biography of Sri Swamiji was one of Satyavratji's ardent desires, for which he kept on prodding me. He would keep telling me about what shape the book should take, what to write, how to write, etc., Sri Swamiji would sometimes comment, "Why bother writing these useless things?" to which Satyavratji would reply, "Maharajji, now that you have made the two of us the wheels of your chariot, once the wheels start moving they will definitely leave squiggly marks. With your grace and blessings, we will derive some meaning out of those squiggly marks." Sri Swamiji would then say, "All right, as you wish. Let us see what you end up writing."

After 1969, Satyavratji used to make many observations about Sri Swamiji's state, sadhana and thoughts which I was not able to comprehend at the time. Now I see clearly the truth in those statements. He would say, "Sri Swamiji has a grand plan in mind for the ancient ruins in front of the ashram, Karna Chaura. His plan will definitely materialize.

A new history will be written from that place. Sometimes Sri Swamiji's thoughts and plans flash by like lightning in my mind's eye and in those moments I wonder whether I am in Kali yuga or thinking about a rishi from Treta yuga. There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that our revered Gurudev is walking and will keep on walking in the footsteps of those illustrious rishis from the past. Sri Swamiji's state is becoming more and more sublime with every passing day. People cannot understand him because they have their own axes to grind. I may not be around but my support and best wishes will always be with you. You have to understand and manage everything. And you also have to write without fail." I would keep on listening and laughing.

After Satyavratji's demise, I was totally shattered. I felt unable to do anything. At that time Sri Swamiji had said, "You have to take up all the responsibilities like an avadhoota. You have to complete the unfinished tasks of Satyavrat." With the untold blessings and guidance of Sri Swamiji, soon everything came back on track, but writing still seemed like an impossible task. As time went by, I would occasionally feel inspired to write but as I sat down to pen my thoughts, more often than not I would get lost in my train of thoughts. Swami Niranjan's letter arrived from America, "You must write Sri Swamiji's biography." No matter how hard I tried, my pen refused to budge. The sunsets kept reminding me that I was in the evening years of my life. A voice within kept warning me that time was running out,

*A lot has elapsed, only a little is left;  
do not delay anymore.  
Write down all you have collected;  
you will succeed for sure.*

Earlier I would study the files, notebooks, magazines and books that I had compiled about Sri Swamiji off and on, but now I kept all of them in front of me and did *trataka* on them. The erratic flow of thoughts began to calm down, and a clear picture of how to arrange these flowers into a beautiful

bouquet began to emerge. My pen began to move. Somehow I managed to write something about the glorious life of this modern day Shukadeva, the Bhagiratha of this age. But if I don't write further, how will the book be complete? And writing anymore about Sri Swamiji is an uphill task.

Whatever I have written till now is an account of the life and works of my beloved guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, for which I had his instruction and blessings. Whatever I write next will be dedicated to that exalted tapasvi of Ganga Darshan, who in one stroke reduced himself from the vast ocean he had become to a tiny droplet. After much thought I have come to the conclusion that Sri Swamiji has and will always be an ocean. By becoming a tiny point for conducting his sadhana and tapasya, he will become a fathomless ocean for all times to come. This is the goal he is striving towards, and which he will definitely accomplish by the grace of God.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati had already freed himself from all the administrative responsibilities of the ashram in 1983. He had continued to give satsangs and discourses at Ganga Darshan and other places from time to time. Under his guidance and direction, Ganga Darshan grew by leaps and bounds and will continue to do so in the future as well.

### **Departure from Ganga Darshan**

After celebrating the Guru Poornima of 1987 as Swami Sivananda's birth centenary with great joy and enthusiasm, Sri Swamiji had started dropping hints about his impending departure and pilgrimage in his talks and satsangs. During the Guru Poornima of 1988, Sri Swamiji conducted a three-day satsang program himself. He would remain on stage from early morning till night, conducting classes on *Saundarya Lahari*, Upanishads, *Gita*, *Ramayana*, japa, meditation and nada yoga. He also warned the assembled people that these were his last satsangs.

Ten days after Guru Poornima, on Sunday, 8-8-88, he had instructed everyone to gather in the kutir for the *Ramayana* television serial, much before it actually started. He left

the ashram as a parivrajaka carrying nothing with him. It was only at the insistent request of Swami Niranjana that he agreed to accept Rs 108. He firmly declined any further assistance. Swami Niranjana thought that Sri Swamiji would return to Ganga Darshan after completing his pilgrimage, but Sri Swamiji had something completely different on his mind. He quietly departed from his residence, Sri Niwas. All the ashram inmates were busy watching the television serial at the time. Handing over everything to Swami Niranjana mentally, Sri Swamiji departed from Ganga Darshan and headed towards his new destination.

In his own words, *“I am a bird of the endless sky, I am the ceaseless flow of nectar.”* And it appeared as if Mother Nature herself had opened her arms to welcome this sannyasin par excellence, an epitome of tyaga and vairagya, *“Wherefrom thorns on the path now, my path is bedecked with flowers . . .”*

The great tapasvi of Ganga Darshan, remaining true to his nickname of yore, ‘Nirmohi’, left behind everything that he had created and set off on his pilgrimage to various tirthas to pay his respects to the various devi-devatas, fulfilling a promise he had made years ago. First of all he went to Kashi Vishwanath, and thereafter he visited Vindhya-vasini, Dwarkadheesh, Vaishnava Devi, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Haridwar and Sivananda Ashram at Rishikesh. In October he went to Deoghar for the darshan of Baba Baidyanath. As soon as he heard the news, Swami Niranjana travelled to Deoghar to meet Sri Swamiji.

Swami Niranjana requested him to come to Ganga Darshan for some time, but he firmly stated:

I have no obligation or attachment with the gurudom of Bihar School of Yoga. My parivrajaka life has started again. I had roamed throughout the country like a mendicant for eight years after leaving my guru’s ashram. Now I will go to each and every doorstep of the Lord as a royal mendicant. If I ever visit Ganga Darshan, it will be in the capacity of a sadhaka, not a guru.

He further said:

Niranjan, my blessings are always with you. I am fully confident that you have the ability to bear the various responsibilities I have placed upon your shoulders. Whether someone stays or goes, do not bother; just go on doing your duty with honesty and sincerity amidst this selfish world. Trials reveal the true colours of everyone. I had taken the sankalpa of making you my successor at Gangotri after having received a vision and the blessings of Ma Ganga four years before your birth. After successfully fulfilling that sankalpa, I have just come back from Gangotri where I paid my respects to Ma Ganga. Next year I shall take you there as well for Ma Ganga's darshan and blessings.

After spending four hours in his company, Swami Niranjan returned from Deoghar in the evening. The next morning he related the news about Sri Swamiji to all the ashram inmates and sannyasins. Everyone was greatly distressed to learn that Sri Swamiji would not be coming back. Swami Niranjan consoled them, saying, "Sri Swamiji is free to act as he likes. As disciples our sole duty is to fulfil our guru's mandate. In the tradition of sannyasa, we have read that detachment and vairagya are the true characteristics of a sannyasin, and as Swami Sivananda said, it is this spirit of sannyasa we find resplendent in Sri Swamiji."

Under Swami Niranjan's able direction, all the activities and courses continued as before at Ganga Darshan. Sri Swamiji's blessings are embedded in each and every atom of the ashram. Everyone who comes to the ashram always leaves with a special feeling.

In January 1989, Sri Swamiji was in Allahabad to attend the Kumbha Mela. As per his instructions, Swami Niranjan went to Allahabad on 12th January. On 13th January, Sri Swamiji took Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi on a tour of the Kumbha Mela and introduced them to several saints and sannyasins. On the night of the 13th, they walked ten

kilometres to take a bath at the Sangam at 2.30 am during the auspicious muhurta of Makar Sankranti. Receiving Sri Swamiji's satsang, blessings and instruction to return in February, Swami Niranjana returned to Munger.

As per Sri Swamiji's directive, Swami Niranjana returned to Allahabad on 4th February. At 3 am on the 6th, the auspicious day of Mauni Amavasya, they had a bath at the Sangam. Thereafter Sri Swamiji and Swami Niranjana visited the different akharas, met various saints and had satsang with them. Swami Niranjana returned to Munger on the fourth day to conduct the Silver Jubilee celebrations of BSY.

On 19th January, Basant Panchami, 1964, Sri Swamiji had lit the akhanda jyoti, signifying the foundation of the Bihar School of Yoga. On 10th February 1989, the auspicious day of Basant Panchami, the Silver Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga was celebrated with great enthusiasm. The program included bhajans, kirtans, discourses, satsang and Narayan bhoj. A three-day symposium of doctors from India and abroad was also organized from the 11th to the 13th. There were panel discussions on asthma and a research program was chalked out. It was planned to conduct yoga camps at many different places to collect research data.

Following Sri Swamiji's directive, Swami Niranjana reached Delhi on 28th May. From there he accompanied Sri Swamiji to Gangotri by car. In 1957 Satyavratji and Basanti had accompanied Sri Swamiji to Gangotri. The trip had involved a seventy-five mile trek from Dharasu to Gangotri. Now roads have been built on which cars and buses ply regularly. On the way to Gangotri Sri Swamiji told Swami Niranjana anecdotes from the trip of 1957. He showed him the places where they had halted and stayed for the night, the place where they had encountered difficulties and so on. Sri Swamiji fondly remembered Satyavratji, his dear friend and associate, and narrated many anecdotes about him.

Sri Swamiji took Swami Niranjana to the place where he had received the darshan and mandate of Ma Ganga. He prayed at that spot and asked for the blessings of Ma

Ganga for his successor. Then he said, “Niranjan, this is your real birthplace.” (Maybe the thought currents of Sri Swamiji and some yogi sitting in deep meditation in one of the Himalayan caves collided here. The two souls met in unspoken communion, and Swami Niranjan’s birth took place in due course.) Sri Swamiji took him around the streams, mountains and jungles of the place and introduced him to the mahatmas dwelling in that region. Having finished his task of seeking blessings for his successor, Sri Swamiji sent Swami Niranjan back on the third day and himself stayed on for a few more days. Thereafter he continued his sacred pilgrimage.

At the special request of Swami Niranjan, Sri Swamiji began sending accounts of his pilgrimage for publication in the ashram magazines. I think it would be best if an account of his pilgrimage is reproduced in this book in his very own words. Writing anything more about that great sage now feels like lighting a tiny lamp in the dazzling brilliance of the midday sun.

A sannyasin who accompanied Sri Swamiji on some of these pilgrimages once said, “Sri Swamiji is undoubtedly established in the highest state. At his guru’s ashram he performed intense sadhana, seva and karma yoga. Day and night would he toil, without a moment’s rest. That is how he acquired all the skills, human and superhuman, that we see in him today. He is totally indifferent to censure and praise, taking both in his stride.

“When Ganga Darshan came up, the work began to spread, and so did the facilities and amenities. When he travelled by train, there would be a separate bogie for him. When he travelled by air, he would fly first class. He travelled all over India on ‘Pushpak’ and ‘Garuda’, his two trustworthy cars. At Ganga Darshan, he stayed in the air-conditioned comfort of Sri Niwas, his beautiful residence on top of the Main Building. But in one stroke he left everything, and started travelling on crowded buses and second-class railway coaches. We all know how crowded buses can be on



Indian roads; one feels so suffocated. Yet Sri Swamiji was unperturbed. He covered long distances on foot, and his feet were badly blistered. During seminars and conventions, he had been staying in five-star hotels, but now he was sleeping on the floor in crowded dharmashalas.

“At one place, he was drawing water from a well, some way off from the nearest village. The well was quite deep, and when he saw the village women and children coming there to fetch water, he began drawing water and filling their containers as well. His hands got blistered but his face was beaming. During his wanderings, he would even sleep by the road under a tree. He has always been the ‘blissful Satchidananda’ in each and every situation, but when I recount some of his experiences and think about the physical hardships he is undergoing, I . . .” and she was too overcome by emotion to finish her sentence.

I was also greatly distraught and saddened by the sudden, drastic change in Sri Swamiji’s lifestyle. I have been observing him for the last four decades. Time and tide wait for none. Sri Swamiji is also moving with the times, walking in the footsteps of Rama, Sri Krishna, Buddha, Mahavir and great rishis and munis from our glorious past. This book is but a small attempt to capture the greatness of this modern-day tapasvi and rishi.

Strange are the dictates of destiny. My parents were not unaware of what the future held in store for me. That is why they gave me such an upbringing that I was not swayed from my path of duty even in the face of great storms and upheavals. Even in the midst of luxuries and pleasures, I was not swept away by the cascade of materialism. When Sri Swamiji arrived in Nandgram in June 1956, my father told me with great happiness and contentment, “My child, now that you have met your real father, I am not worried about you anymore,” as if he had been waiting for the arrival of Sri Swamiji all along. He kept repeating this sentiment until he finally left his mortal coil in great peace and happiness on 2nd October 1956.

Whatever I have seen, understood, learnt and gained at the feet of my divine father, I have placed for the world to see and benefit from. Tendering my fervent apologies to Sri Swamiji for any inadvertent sins of commission and omission, I humbly request the intelligent readers of this book to not merely read it, but to comprehend the lessons inherent in this book and imbibe them in their life.

The narrative that follows is from Sri Swamiji's accounts of his pilgrimage as a 'royal mendicant' and the writings of Swami Niranjana . . .

### **A window into the new chapter in Sri Swamiji's life**

#### **From the desk of Swami Niranjana:**

I was recalled to India by Swamiji in 1983 to assume the presidency of Bihar School of Yoga. On that very day of 19th January, when I reached Munger, Swamiji said to me, "I have called you here to take over the entire work of BSY and all that I have created, and succeed me in every way. My role here is over. There are other horizons beckoning me and I must go."

Of course his words brought tears to my eyes then, as they do now, because I did not want to lose Swamiji; but I understood that Swamiji's role is far greater and more universal, and in order for him to experience his universality, we may have to lose his physical presence. However, I did take the liberty of requesting him to stay in Munger a bit longer if only to be physically present to guide and inspire me, as I had been away from him almost since my childhood. To this he agreed and as you very well know, he remained in Munger until 1988.

1988 came, and he once again started speaking of his plans to go away. This he mentioned both publicly in his satsangs as well as privately to his disciples. Of course, he always did say, "My departure will be sudden and I will leave as I had come, with only one jhola!" Many did not believe this would ever happen and overlooked it, and many of us secretly prayed that it may never happen.

But true to his word, on 8th August 1988, Swamiji bade farewell to BSY, to Munger, and to all he had created in the short span of twenty years.

Since then we have been receiving his newsletters from time to time, describing his experiences at the places he has been visiting. They have served as a window into the present life of Swamiji, offering us a glimpse of the direction in which he is heading.

One thing is clear from these newsletters, that Swamiji is now completely and totally surrendering himself to the Divine Will. His life as we have seen it earlier has been an expression of that too; however, now his aim is total surrender, even to the extent of giving up food, clothing and shelter, if that be His will. He meets no one, eats once a day a meal so sparse that it could not feed a bird, cooks for himself, lives anywhere in any mud hut offered to him, and is forever lost in *naam smarana*, remembrance of God's name.

I have had the good fortune to have his darshan four times since he left. At Baidyanath Dham where he broke the news to me that he was definitely now on a new path and his return to Munger, as before, in the role of guru was impossible. At the Kumbha Mela where he spoke of now living the life of a Paramahansa Naga as that was the initiation which he received from Swami Sivanandaji. At Rishikesh and Gangotri where he was lost in an inner vision and told me of his last visit to Gangotri in 1957 when he had taken the sankalpa of making me his successor, four years prior to my birth. And finally at his mud kutiya in Trayambakeshwar where, without his saying anything, I myself knew that the bird had finally left the cage.

The transformation is unbelievable, but the change is so natural and spontaneous that one is left feeling that this too is an aspect of the divinity which Swamiji has shown us in so many ways. Perhaps all this is a bit strange for us as we do not hear or know of any sannyasi or mahatma within our living experience who has taken such a step.

But we have only to look into the shastras to know that the path Swamiji has chosen to tread is the same one which the great mahatmas such as Shukadeva, Adi Shankaracharya, Dattatreya, Mahavir and other paramahamsas who have left their footprints in the sands of time have chosen for themselves.

Since I have taken over the work, I have always endeavoured to shoulder the institutional responsibility myself, leaving Swamiji free for the greater mission that he is destined for. But now more than ever, I strongly feel that Swamiji's path should no longer be restricted or hindered in any way by any of us, either by emotional attachments or personal needs, for which we may want to approach him from time to time. His destiny is that of one who can create the universal vision and we should consider ourselves privileged to support him in whatever way we can, for through that association we ourselves can be raised spiritually.

Therefore, it is my request to all householders, devotees, disciples, karma sannyasins, friends and well-wishers that they should not try to find out where Swamiji stays or try to meet him unless he calls them. And to all sannyasins I say, prepare yourself for the work which lies ahead and try to emulate the example which has been set before you by our beloved Swamiji. Yes, the bird has truly flown and no cage or shutter can hold him now.

### **The Royal Mendicant: 1**

Lord Vishwanath of Kashi gave me his blessings.

Vindhyvasini promised me.

Sankat Mochan, yes, I filed an application there.

Not for myself and certainly not for BSY,

But for someone, somewhere, in troubled waters.

Sangam was refreshing.

Pashupatinath had an air of control and discipline.

Vaishnava Devi stirred me.

When I took a dip at Brahma Kund at Haridwar

My whole body felt the sweetness of that drop  
Of nectar which the Puranas speak of.  
Yamuna Devi at Yamunotri did speak to me.  
Ganga at Gangotri inspired a dream.  
Perhaps an impossible dream, but if she wishes,  
There is nothing which I consider impossible.  
Kedarnath, O Lord! where I lost myself,  
The time, the direction and all that is empirical,  
I am afraid to have that experience again.  
Badri Vishal, a pleasant culmination of all  
The beautiful experiences of life.  
And finally Sivanandashram,  
Words fail to describe the experience.  
I did not feel the absence of Swamiji,  
And certainly, I told him that the ashram  
Was a powerhouse of spiritual life.  
With this,  
I have completed the first part of my mendicancy.

In Sri Swamiji's words:

*With nothing on my body  
And with nothing in my hands,  
Let me roam on the banks of the Ganga  
With the name of Shiva on my lips  
And the thoughts of Devi and Durga in my mind.  
Let me not even know that I exist,  
And when I die I will not know that I am dying.*

## **December 1988**

### **From the desk of Swami Niranjan:**

People throng to religion, gurus and spiritual organizations for guidance and the achievement of their desires. In return they get self-satisfaction and many of their desires are also fulfilled. The problems of this planet may not get solved, but they get an opportunity to dip into the ocean of knowledge. They derive wisdom, but it

remains unexpressed in their behaviour, for the droplets of wisdom which they acquire evaporate in the hot sands of 'samsara'.

The channelling of sublime wisdom into creative action is a rare gift which only a few extraordinary individuals possess. On an encounter with Swamiji, even if it is a casual one, one is deeply impressed that he epitomizes such a person. Behind his personality flows a stream in which wisdom and action are the main currents. The realization of the Supreme from the *Brahma Sutras* and the selfless action of the *Gita* are a spontaneous expression which have become one in him.

Renunciation, giving of alms, sacrifice and austerities are performed by many people, but it is rarely done with a vision of the future. Rather, we see that it is done more for self-contentment. One kind of action moves, motivates and inspires the world, another is only for self-indulgence.

We are counted in the latter category. To motivate, inspire and provide direction to the world, a leader is required who embodies anger as well as pardon and peace, brilliance and shrewdness as well as simplicity and innocence, down to earth awareness as well as far-sightedness. One in whom both the fiery brilliance of Parashurama as well as the astute and calm wisdom of Rama are manifest. One who symbolizes the determination and righteous wisdom of Krishna and Yudhishtira, the glow and warmth of the sun and the silvery, soothing and healing coolness of the moon. Such a multi-faceted, mysterious and practical leader can mould a definite future from the gathering of scattered, diverted and dissipated energies.

Upon meeting and seeing Swamiji, all know deep down that he is such a leader. At present he is on a pilgrimage of India and her siddha tirthas with a definite constructive purpose. He is infusing the heart and mind with a new energy, a new mantra to unite the future. Be ready to receive him.

## **The Royal Mendicant: 2**

In Vasukinath, as I lay under a shady tree,  
I had a dream vision  
Of a hooded serpent coiled around my neck  
And the clear instruction, "Become a Chakravarti."  
So I should continue my chakram of the tirthas.  
I performed the nine days of Navaratri anushthana  
Amidst the spiritual sanctity of Kamakhya.  
On Dashami I worshipped the Devi incarnate kanya  
And performed the ritual of washing her feet.  
The purity and innocence of the shraddha  
Which came alive in me was that of a child  
Who calls out to his mother  
And I did receive an answer through her.  
In Kalighat, Calcutta, I had darshan of Kali,  
The destroyer of kala and destiny.  
Jagannath Puri was full of ananda.  
I simply transcended myself as I sat for hours  
Under the shaded groves  
In the temple precincts.  
I cherish a longing  
To once again be in that courtyard  
Where shraddha becomes a living experience.  
There I met Swamis Nityabodha, Mahatma  
And other Aussies.  
With this,  
The second part of my mendicancy is over.

## **January 1989**

### **From the desk of Swami Niranjan:**

This year I had the honour of being twice in the august presence of Swamiji during the Kumbha Mela in Allahabad. First was on the Makar Sankranti day. I reached Allahabad at 2 am on 13th January and was taken by Swamiji himself on a guided tour of the Mela Nagar and the Sangam. On this day we also had darshan of many sadhus gathered there for the occasion. On 14th

at 3 am, after a *raatri jagaran* (all-night vigil), we had our first bath in the freezing cold waters of the Sangam, which was limited to three dips only on a very freezing morning. Then by 7 am Swamiji left Allahabad for destinations unknown and I returned the same day to Munger.

The second visit, for which I had already taken permission from Swamiji, was during the auspicious occasion of Mauni Amavasya. Some of the sadhus and swamis of whom we had darshan include Mahamandaleshwar Sri Swami Vishwadevanandaji of Nirvani Akhara, Sri Godawari Giri Maharaj, a great Naga saint of Juna Akhara, Pilot Baba, Swami Santoshi Mata of Kankhal, Haridwar, Maharaj of Amarkantak Udaseen Sampradaya, Sri Swami Chidanandaji of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, and Dr Brahmamitra Awastha, a great research scholar from Keshawananda Yoga Sansthan. The highlight of our visit was the darshan of Sri Devaraha Baba.

On the 6th morning at 1.30 am we had our second bath at the Sangam and in the milling crowd, we returned to our place of stay.

The visits at the Kumbha Mela have left an everlasting and wondrous impression in my mind as I experienced faith not as a concept but as a living reality.

### **The Royal Mendicant: 3**

#### **Khajuraho, 18–20 November 1988**

Khajuraho, a tribute paid to Lord Shiva by the Chandela dynasty, was a haunting experience of the rites and rituals that were an inseparable part of the lives of our ancestors, the rishis and munis, who not only gave birth to our civilization, but also dedicated their lives to the exploration of energy and consciousness behind matter. The sublime depiction of that dramatic cosmic process of creation revealed life as a 'prayer'. Warriors, musicians, devas, apsaras, gandharvas, men, women and beasts came alive and spoke in unison of a time when not just eroticism, as has been overly emphasized in all depictions of



the temple, but every aspect of life was considered as a means to reach God.

### **Chitrakoot, 21 November**

It was on this very spot 'at the ghat of Chitrakoot when all the saints gathered to watch Saint Tulsidas grinding chandan paste to anoint a tilak on his ishta devata, Sri Ram, that the Lord revealed himself in person. Here amidst the sylvan setting of Kamadgiri, I delved into the time when Sri Ramji eternally sanctified this soil by taking refuge here. During a few reflective moments as I rested at the foot of the mountain where thousands do parikrama, the murmuring streams, dancing trees and flowing rivers sang to me of the glorious year when Sri Ramji with Sita and Lakshman played his lila at Chitrakoot.

### **Maihar, 22 November**

The long and steep climb up to the shrine of Sharada Devi, as I rested at intervals due to a foot sore from my trek to Kedarnath, was reminiscent of the ascent of kundalini to sahasrara, resting and reposing at each chakra. Sharada Devi, the goddess of vidya, to whom noted musicians and artists pay tribute, my salutations flow to you for awakening the creative energy.

### **Amarkantak, 3-7 December**

Amarkantak, 'the forest of the immortals', vibrant with the energy of great tapasvis, rishis and munis who have practised sadhana there from time immemorial, breathed an air of tranquillity, harmony and balance. During my dip at the Narmada Udgam, I felt as if my body was being caressed by the breath of Shiva from whose body she has emanated.

A bath at Kapil Dhara where the icy cold Narmada falls freely, a sip of water at the source of the Sone, a walk through the deep forest to Bhrigu Kamandal and resting at Mai ki Bagiya, I felt oneness with nature.

Every night as my physical body rested at the ashram of the Udaseen Sampradaya, my astral self was out in the open, ‘majestically walking with Shiva’, body smeared with bhasma, snake coiled around the neck, trident and damaru in hand, stalking the wild forest.

### **Mahakaleshwar, Ujjain, 11–14 December**

The eternally sanctified city of Ujjain, which was conquered with pride by Shiva, where I performed bhasma abhishek on Mahakaleshwar, the swayambhu jyotirlinga of Lord Shiva. The ceremony lasted one and a half hours and only a few select people were present.

The rest of the day was spent in fasting and in chanting mantras before Mahakaleshwarji. The three-foot black linga encircled by Nag Raj and set with flawless perfection on a silver yoni, thronged by hundreds of devotees, silently projecting shakti from within itself, defied all understanding and brought alive the timeless tradition of shraddha and bhakti.

### **Kala Bhairava, Ujjain, 14 December**

You have been consuming the madira offered to you by your ardent devotees. Now, I offer you the intoxication which has led me through several incarnations, for this is all I have. And with this humble offering I seek your protection while I tread throughout the wilderness of life.

### **Omkareshwar, 15–16 December**

This sacred Om-shaped island on the banks of Narmada Devi, where Adi Shankaracharya received sannayasa diksha from Guru Govinda Pada and later performed the miracle of absorbing Narmada in his kamandal, transformed faith into a living experience. There in the cave where Shankaracharya lived, as I stood with folded hands, I heard a voice within say, “What do you seek? Ask and it shall be yours.” That brought to my mind the utterances of Maitreyi and Nachiketas and in an outburst of Sanskrit,

I said, “Digvijay – no; Immortality – not possible; Prosperity – had plenty; Moksha – it is in me. I have come here merely to fulfil my promise which I made to you thirty years ago, to return when my work is over.”

A secret passage from Shankaracharya’s cave led me to the *garbha griha*, inner sanctum, where the jyotirlinga of Omkareshwar stood in meditative silence amidst the chanting of mantras. Bells were chiming, conches were being blown and amidst all of this tumult as I laid my head at the feet of Omkareshwarji, I vividly experienced that this jyotirlinga was eternally luminescent in sahasrara.

### **Datia, 18–19 December**

The Pitambari Peeth of Shakti at whose feet saints and sages have realized the supreme – I was returning here after thirty years to find that Sri Swamiji of Pitambari Peeth had left his physical body. He was my third tantric guru with whom I lived for four days during my parivrajaka life, after I had served Swami Sivananda at Rishikesh. His dedication to the propagation of tantric sadhana will forever remain enshrined in my life.

With this, I have completed the third part of my mendicancy.

### **August 1989**

#### **From the desk of Swami Niranjan:**

There are many different stages in the life of a sannyasin. He builds an ashram at one place and serves; this is one stage. Then he abandons the ashram and his working place; this is the second stage. At first he works with a limited group and then, having been united with the universal consciousness, he works to achieve a universal aim, leaving the limited group. This higher state is then traditionally called *kshetra sannyasa*. The aim of Swamiji in leaving the ashram over a year ago was not merely to visit the different tirthas, but at that time he decided to take kshetra sannyasa.

In accordance with Swami Sivananda's instructions, when Swamiji started the work of spreading yoga, he had to stop his paramahansa sadhana for some time in order to make yoga available for all. The first instruction Swamiji received from Swami Sivananda was to serve. When free from this service, that is, when all the inner samskaras are burnt, then sadhana begins.

I had an opportunity to live with Swamiji from 5th–11th August in Trayambakeshwar. He was living in a small room, 8 ft by 10 ft, which he cleaned himself. He slept on the floor, spreading a mat. He took only sprouted moong for lunch and brahma khichari for dinner which he prepared himself. There was no running water or electricity. He did not even meet with anyone. He was totally absorbed in sadhana, observing complete silence the whole day.

Swamiji said that a time must come in our lives when remembrance of the name goes on with total awareness. It should not be like ajapa japa where unconscious repetition of the mantra takes place. This japa should be continuous with total awareness. Swamiji told me that the only aim of his sadhana is unbroken repetition of name. If he can be aware of name even in the dissipated state of mind, then the perception of anahad nada will arise.

However, during this period when the guru's consciousness is directed towards the universal or cosmic dimension, the disciples still wish to meet him at their level of consciousness. This causes disturbance in his sadhana. Therefore, Swamiji does not tell anyone where he is and what he is doing. Swamiji will continue his sadhana and austere life, not for one or two years, but for a long period of time. The state which he aims to achieve is total merging with the atma without leaving the physical body. In order to complete that, he needs our help.

Disciples should not think emotionally about how Swamiji cooks his food and cleans his room himself. Instead they should think about how they can help

him to achieve his aim. As disciples, we must follow his instructions word for word. He has given us many instructions, but we only follow those which appeal to us and forget about the others, claiming that we will do it when some inner inspiration comes. This is hypocrisy. If this is the way, then it is meaningless to become a disciple. If we follow the guru's instructions in this way, it is because of our ignorance. If we tread the path of ignorance and think we are doing what is right, then there is no solution at all. Such a person will ever remain backward in life. Now you have to decide which path to choose for yourself.

### **The Royal Mendicant: 4**

**Mathura, Vrindavan, Gokul and Barsana,**

**1-11 January 1989**

1989 began with a pilgrimage to Mathura Mandal or Vraj where Lord Krishna manifested as an avatar in the Dwapara Yuga and where he enacted the entire Vraj lila. The Lord himself has stated in *Varaha Purana* that there is no other place in all the three worlds dearer to him than Vraj or Mathura:

*Na vidyate cha paataale naantarikshe na maanushe  
Samatvam mathurayaa hi priyam mama vasundhare.*

(150:8)

*Mathureti cha vikhyaatamasti kshetram param mama  
Suramyaa cha sushastaa cha janmabhoomih priyaa mama*

(150:11)

The crystal blue waters of Yamunaji from Yamunotri flow freely through this town, and sitting on its bank I delved deep into the nostalgic memories of the playful lila of Krishna with Radha, which has been lyricized by renowned poets time and again.

Everything in Vraj resounded with the blissful memories of Krishna consciousness whether it was a darshan of Gokul, the first home of Krishna where he acquired the name ‘Makhan Chor’, or Vrindavan where he vanquished Kaliya and enacted his rasa lila with the gopis, and acquired the name ‘Rasiya’, or a parikrama of Govardhana Parvat where he protected his people from Indra’s wrath by lifting the mountain on his finger, thus acquiring the name ‘Giridhara’, or a stroll through Barsana where his favourite gopi, Radha, lived.

I spent twelve days in the land of Krishna at Swami Akhandanandaji’s ashram, and during that time the entire *Bhagavata* katha came alive with its colourful stories of a legend that will forever inspire me. It was here too that I had darshan of the great saint, Devraha Baba.

### **Kumbha Mela: Prayag, Allahabad, 12–14 January & 2–7 February**

Prayag, the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, the symbols of ida, pingala and sushumna, has been forever eulogized as *tirtharaj*, the king of tirthas. The *Padma Purana* states:

*Grahanaam cha yathaa sooryo nakshtranaam yathaa shashee  
Teerthanaamuttamam teertham prayaagaakhyamanuttamam.*

(Uttara Khanda, 24:4)

‘Just as the Sun is supreme among the planets and the Moon is supreme among the stars, Prayag is the supreme tirtha.’ Poorna Kumbha Mela is held at Prayag every twelve years when the planetary positions of Brihaspati or Jupiter in Vrish Rashi (Taurus) and Surya or the Sun in Makar Rashi (Capricorn) are affected. This year was especially auspicious as Somavati Amavasya took place after one hundred and seventy-two years.

I took part in two *snaan parvas* or bathing festivals, that of Makar Sankranti on January 14th and Somavati Amavasya on February 6th. The charged waters of Sangam

electrified my whole body and I could easily feel the truth of the saying that a bath here gives a man rebirth in this life itself.

I had called Swami Niranjana to be with me during this momentous occasion and to have darshan of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati Devi. During the rest of the days we jostled with millions of devotees who had come there like me, and being amidst them was in itself a moving experience. Throngs of people from every culture, race and creed, with just one thought in mind, to bathe at Prayag, gave me the unique vision of witnessing faith in motion, and I could easily conceive the idea of that 'Faith' which is a dynamic principle and has been known to move mountains.

I also had the darshan of many sadhus and saints who had all gathered there, including Mahant Godavari of Juna Akhara, Devraha Baba, the Jagadguru Shankaracharyas and many other tapasvis and tyagis. For days afterwards and even now when I close my eyes, I can re-enact the vision of the crowds milling through the sandy bed of the Ganga and all the devas, gandharvas and ap-saras gathered in the sky to witness this great spectacle.

### **Datia, 15 January – 8 February**

I took a few days off between the two snaan parvas at the Kumbha to pay a visit to Pitambari Peeth at Datia for the anushthana of Tripura Sundari who has been enshrined there. The swamis accompanying me chanted *Saundaryalahari* for the success of my anushthana.

### **Katni, 8–10 February**

After my second bath at the Kumbha Mela, where I made the sankalpa to throw off the mantle of a guru and don the robes of a parivrajaka, I travelled to Katni at the invitation of Sri Agrawal to inaugurate his yoga school. Although I have totally abandoned preaching, teaching and initiating disciples, I kept this appointment as I had already committed myself earlier.

### **Dwarka, 18–20 February**

The land where Lord Krishna migrated from Mathura with the entire Vrishni clan to set up his kingdom and enact yet another episode of his lila for which he was given the title ‘Ranchornathji’, or one who fled from the battleground.

The images of Bal Gopal and Kanhaiya are replaced by that of Dwarkanath, or king of Dwarka. Sitting on the banks of the Gomati river, I relived the era when the city of Dwarka, which is now submerged, flourished as a kingdom of the Lord. Amidst the chanting of folk songs I had the darshan of the Chaturbhuj image of ‘Ranchornathji’ glamorously decorated with one hundred and eight different types of bhoga, yet another aspect of the divine.

My stay at Dwarka was rendered in three hours, from 7.15 to 10.45 pm. The temple doors were closed during this time so as to not disturb the Lord, and sitting in my hotel room I lost myself in *naam smarana* (remembrance of Name) and a deep inner vision of Vishnu reposing on an eclipsed moon.

### **Somnath, 21–23 February**

Somnath, one of the Dwadash jyotirlingas, having a history which fades into legend, is said to have been originally built out of gold by Somraj, the moon god himself. Today, despite the repeated raids and ravages of destruction that the temple has faced, a stone jyotirlinga majestically glows in the temple precincts. I spent my days at the seashore in reflection and chintan.

### **Shirdi, 12–14 March**

The samadhi of Sai Baba, who has been heralded as an avatar, was the first tirtha which I visited in Maharashtra. It is said that not just the temple but the entire town of Shirdi resonates with the spiritual vibrations of the great saint Sai Baba.



Sitting at the eternally lit dhuni of Baba I did feel a strong spiritual energy field which could only have been created by the tapasya and vairagya of a mahapurusha. The early morning arati which I attended was filled with the shraddha and love of thousands of devotees who had gathered there.

### **Mahabaleshwar, 5–8 April**

Beautifully housed in a temple of black slab stone, the jyotirlinga of Mahabaleshwar is also said to be the source of the five rivers: Savitri, Krishna, Venya, Koyan and Gayatri. As a result, this jyotirlinga, which bears the mark of a Rudraksha, is continually bathed by the sanctified water of these rivers.

It is said that Brahma, Mahesh and Vishnu are eternally present here and the stark beauty of the valleys, the shady and dense forests, the streams, all lend probability to this belief. I spent many hours here walking through the forests which are beautiful but sinister, and few dare to venture there. I saw the spot where Brahma held a yajna and one day I accidentally came across an abandoned Shiva temple overlooking the beautiful Krishna valley.

### **Nasik, Trayambakeshwar, 12–14 April**

My next tirtha was to the holy cities of Nasik and Trayambakeshwar where Godavari, one of the seven holy rivers of India, originates. It was here in Panchavati that Sri Rama spent eleven years in exile and it was here too that Sita was abducted by Ravana.

After archana at Kushravat, the source of the Godavari, I had darshan of the jyotirlinga of Lord Trayambakeshwar, which is unique on account of three lingas emerging out of a single stone. Here I conducted a special pooja with chants of *Rudrashtakam*. Later I did parikrama of the mandir and had darshan of many mahatmas residing there.

### **Bhimashankar, 5–6 May**

A pilgrimage to Bhimashankar was like a journey back to nature. The lush green forests of Bhimashankar, unspoiled and untarnished by modern civilization, radiated peace and harmony. Surrounded by hills where the rakshasi Dakini is known to reside is the jyotirlinga of Bhimashankar. The temple itself is very ancient, and unlike other tirthas where one has to ascend to worship the deity, here the devotee has to descend a flight of steps before having darshan of the jyotirlinga.

Although this place is less known among the jyotirlingas, the tranquil setting and the spiritual vibrations of the place make it an important tirtha. Shiva is known to have rested here after slaying the demon Tripurasura.

### **Ghushmeshwar, 7–9 May**

Named after a bhakta called Ghushma, the jyotirlinga at Ghushmeshwar was a boon she received from Shiva for her unflinching devotion. It is also known as Shivalaya, because Shiva promised her that he would be eternally present here. Near this temple are the famed Ellora caves which I also visited after many years. The beautiful sculptures carved out of gigantic mountains, which spread over an area of one mile, are a breathtaking and soothing sight for the eyes.

### **Nathdwara, 15–17 May**

The seat of the Vallabh Sampradaya, renowned for the rites and rituals adopted by the Pushti Margis, Nathdwara gives one the feeling of actually being in the presence of Lord Krishna. The rich folklore which recounts the legend of Lord Krishna is sung daily in the courtyard which houses the deity, while devoted poojaris tend to every need of the Lord, such as bathing, dressing, eating and even fanning him while he reposes on his silken bed. Devotees are even given darshan of the decorative headgear, jewellery and the costumes of Lord Krishna

amidst showers of cool water sprinkled with khas and rose fragrance, a wonderful experience for a bhakta.

According to legend, the black stone image of Sri Nathji was brought here from Mathura in 1669 and, when an attempt was later made to move the image, the wagon carrying the deity sank into the ground up to the axles, indicating that the image preferred to stay where it was.

### **Kankroli, 15–17 May**

A little further down from Nathdwara is another important seat of the Pushti Margi sect which houses an image of Dwarkadheesh. It is a simple temple with the same elaborate ceremonies as Nathdwara. I saw here for the first time a painting which speaks of an incident when Sri Krishna received the prasad of bhang from Lord Shiva. Strangely enough, the Charanamrit given to me here was thandai with bhang. I sat in the temple precincts for many hours amidst the chanting of Krishna bhajans in the local dialect.

### **Eklingi, 15–17 May**

The temple of Eklingi is spread over a vast area and houses images of almost every deity. The main deity in the garbha griha is that of a four-faced image of Shiva emerging from a black marble shivalingam. The deity is elaborately decorated every day and mantras are chanted as part of the ritual. To enter the garbha griha, I was given a special robe by the poojari and I had personal darshan of Eklingi Maharaj.

### **Pushkar, 18–20 May**

Just as Prayag is known as king of tirthas, Pushkar is renowned as the guru of all tirthas. No pilgrimage is complete without a visit here. Its main importance lies in the fact that the only Brahma temple in India is found here. It is said that Rishi Agastya had his ashram here. After a dip in the Pushkar lake and a bath at Agastyakund, I had

darshan of Brahmaji and conducted a special pooja at the beautiful temple.

### **Mount Abu, May 1989**

In the artistic and majestic Jain temple of Dilwara I meditated in front of the big dark statue of Lord Mahavir. Here I was inspired to further walk the path of self-discovery, filled with renunciation, *tyaga bhava*.

Here also I had darshan of the cave and the place of austerity of Lord Dattatreya, which is now under the patronage of Niranjani Akhara. I had stayed here in my previous wanderings many, many years ago. I feel that my future is being directed by Lord Dattatreya.

### **Ajmer, May 1989**

After my time at Pushkar I went to the Dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti and offered a chadar. Thousands come to this place to pray, forgetting their caste and religion. In the atmosphere, filled with devotion and faith, I did japa and dhyana.

### **Gangotri and Badrinath, 30 May–20 June**

This lap of my tirtha was terminated by a visit to Rishikesh, my guru's ashram, Gangotri and Badrinath. I had called Swami Niranjana to accompany me on this trip. There I met many saints and mahatmas and bathed in the icy cold waters of Ganga at Gangotri and the steaming hot water of the Tapt Kund at Badrinath. At Badrinath I also had darshan of Saraswati Udgam at Manas where she emerges with full force out of the mountain – a sight to behold!

### **Chaturmas: 14 July–14 September**

Now my chaturmas begins and I have been invited by a great mahatma of Juna Akhara, Mahant Shivgiri, to stay at Neel Parbat, Trayambakeshwar. Neel Parbat is set amidst a lush range of mountains on all sides. Several

of the mountains are naturally shaped like shivalingams. Neel Parbat itself is a *jagrat* and siddha place, and I have chosen a small goshala to stay in for the next two months. It is a small room, 8' x 8', and here I will remain in *ajnatvas* (solitude) and continue the next lap of my sadhana of naam smarana and remembrance of the Lord in solitude.

## **The Royal Mendicant: 5**

### **Trayambakeshwar, 14 July 1989**

I am at Trayambakeshwar, the jyotirlinga of Lord Shiva, after twenty-six years. It was here in 1963 that the chapter of my life which led me to Munger and the propagation of yoga was first revealed to me. It was here too that I made a sankalpa or promise to return and seek further enlightenment, renouncing all I achieve or accomplish for the propagation of yoga.

This morning I went to have darshan of Lord Mrityunjaya and sought his permission to spend two months of Chaturmas here. A strange coincidence brings me back after so many years to the same place. His Holiness Mahant Shivgiriji Maharaj, the chief of Juna Ahara at Trayambakeshwar, invited me to stay at Neel Parbat, the very same place where I had stayed twenty-six years ago. I have chosen to stay in a goshala at the foot of Neel Parbat, a small room eight foot by eight foot, representing everything ancient in structure, purity and simplicity.

I am alone. What shall I do here? All around me rise the Brahmagiri hills from which the Godavari descends and flows on to the eastern sea. While I meditate under the gular tree outside my kutir and await His next command, I am inspired and intoxicated by the wondrous beauty of these shivalingam-shaped mountains on all sides.

### **Trayambakeshwar, 18 July**

Guru Poornima vrat begins today. At midnight I was bathing in the light when a cyclonic storm started and the command was clear: "Perfect the unbroken awareness

of your guru mantra with every breath and beat of your heart. That is your mission now.”

So here begins the next chapter of my life. And just as I gave my whole self to the accomplishment of His previous command, I shall also plunge deep into all that is required of me to perfect my new mission. The past is dead and gone. Human as I am, I may travel back into the past and circumstances may compel me to accept associations with those with whom I had interacted before. That, too, is His will. But my personal endeavour will be to break away from the past and fulfil the mission given to me by Lord Mrityunjaya.

### **Trayambakeshwar, 8 September**

A question which has been haunting my mind from time to time is answered today. Where do I fulfil my next mission? Many places were offered to me – a beautiful cave at Gangotri on the banks of the Ganga, a kutir at Kedarnath and many others, but I had reserved my decision until the direction was made clear to me. I woke up at midnight as usual. The sky was quiet, the translucent rays of Ashtami were shining through the small windows of my kutir, and I found that I was once again enveloped by a strange light. The command was clear. “Go to my burial ground, the *shmashan bhoomi*.”

That very morning while I was boiling my tea, Swami Satyasangananda arrived all the way from Munger and the first instruction I gave her was to find the place for me. I gave her a glimpse of what I had seen and described its setting and surrounding topography. She left barely three hours after her arrival, in search of the place of my description.

### **Trayambakeshwar, 12 September**

On this day forty-three years ago I shed all that belonged to my poorvashram, the name, the caste, the gotra and many more things, including coat and pants, to don the

geru robes. It was on this day, in Rishikesh by the banks of the Ganga, that my guru Swami Sivanandaji gave me paramahansa diksha of the Dashnami sannyasa order.

A swami arrived by mid-afternoon from Munger to inform me that barely two days after her departure, Swami Satsangi had located the exact setting in Lord Shiva's shmashan bhoomi for my further mission. That evening I performed the Poornahuti for the fulfilment of my prayers and the revelation of a divine place and a clear cut path, just as BSY and Ganga Darshan had been revealed to me twenty-five years ago in the same place by the same Lord Mrityunjaya.

I now wish to make it clear to all of you associated with me in the past that I am dead and will continue to live in the shmashan bhoomi of my ishta devata until he has some other command for me. Prior to my final settling I will pay a visit to Kamakhya and worship Her in Her physical form, which I had promised on Vijaya Dashami last year.

*The hamsa has flown away  
Soaring with its wings spread  
Across the infinite sky.  
It is searching for its ultimate abode  
Since many yugas.  
Knowledge it has received in abundance  
From the jnanis of the world,  
Grace and blessings from the divine too.  
Still today it is restlessly flapping  
Its wings in search.  
Looking down at its own creation  
Of the three worlds  
Etched across the horizon,  
Yes, it is flying high  
And flying ceaselessly in search,  
Witnessing the world down below as lila  
Alone, all alone, in the infinite sky  
My soul is flying to unite with its beloved.*

### 30th September, 1989 (Navaratri)

*Om Namo Naraayanaaya  
O Lord Mrityunjaya!*

*I have worshipped you  
As Kaala Bhairava with one tattwa,  
As Kaamakshi with five tattwas,  
As Vishnu with flowers, fruits, water and milk.*

*In many forms, in many ways  
And in many places  
I have worshipped whatever form  
You have revealed to me as your own image.*

*And now, at your burial ground  
I will worship you with every breath.*

*This I promise.*

#### **Darshan to disciples**

Sri Swamiji called the resident swamis of Ganga Darshan in January 1990. For most of us this was the first meeting since Guru Poornima 1988. For those trusting Swami Niranjan's advice, the message had simply been that for the true disciple, the connection was cosmic, internal and completely independent of physical circumstance; we should respect Sri Swamiji's wish to be alone.

In accordance with this renunciation of even so personal a thing as the yearning to see or speak with one's guru, the work of BSY had continued. It was, therefore, a stunning experience to step from a bus purported to be travelling elsewhere and to see our guru seated in a tent awaiting us, and to know that he had called us. His eyes and body glowed, his hair and beard were long, he had renounced the geru dhoti and wore only a langoti, he revolved a small crystal and coral mala in one hand.

He raised his hand, said 'Om Namo Narayanaya' and instructed us to use that mantra. Because of the circumstances



of the meeting, everyone received their own impressions from the satsang. He spoke in Hindi and English, and memories vary, but this is an attempt to share his message:

I have called you all to tell you not to come again unless I call you. This is Paramahansa Akhara; it is not an ashram. Akhara is only for sadhana and no karma, no prepared food, only bhiksha. Akhara is a tradition. Like Niranjani or Nirvani akhara, this is Paramahansa Akhara and Swami Sivananda is the devata.

Now this Akhara is under construction. After finishing the work, nobody will stay here except me and my black dog. Dog is the vehicle of Bhairava. The Akhara building is for naga sannyasins only. They can stay here only for three days; they will prepare food with their own hands. We are building something over there. My disciple, Swami Atmananda, is giving up everything, all her accomplishments and is coming to join me.

I will stay here, having two flags, black and geru. When the black flag is hoisted no one can enter. It may be for one, two or three days duration. It means nobody should come. When the geru flag is raised, it means the line is clear, we can meet. Soon I will light the dhuni of this place and on that very day I will renounce my last cloth also.

When the moment of my death comes I will not just die surrounded by doctors, devotees and transfusions; I will go consciously, straight through brahmarandhra. I will die in samadhi, and if I am born again it will be in a family of yogis. Don't come asking; you can be proud of me. When you have finished with your work and your desires and your name and fame, you can come here, not before, you understand? Even the desire for samadhi has to come from within, like it did with me.

It is necessary to transcend all desires, even for moksha. Sannyasins are solitary individuals. They should have no emotional attachments to each other or to anything. They should be able to stand alone, independent.

I can only say that God has helped me. Nothing is my desire, it is His. God has been very good to me. He has given me so much help. He has given me everything. I have not had to go through crises like others. No, He simply gave me the best disciple – Swami Niranjan. He makes his own decisions. He doesn't have to ask. Now whatever happens will be because He wants it.

People have their samskaras for sannyasa, for TV, for good food, etc. They cannot come here, you understand? They can go to the ashram and work out their samskaras there – they are just samskaras. Swami Niranjan has a place for them. He is managing beautifully a five star ashram – but this is an infinite star ashram, infinite star.

Stop thinking of me. I don't want your telepathy or your clairvoyance or vibrations. I don't want any thoughts. You have to forget me. I am not available for guidance. Think that I am dead. No emotional attachments – absolutely clear. Om Namo Narayanaya.

### **Baidyanath Dham – past and present**

Lord Trayambakeshwar, the jyotirlinga near Nasik, is the ishta devata of Sri Swamiji. On 8th September 1989, the birthday of Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati, while performing the chaturmas vrat in a small cowshed near the temple, Sri Swamiji received a mandate from his ishta devata, in which his sadhana and the place where he must perform it were clearly revealed to him.

At first we were surprised when he spoke of Deoghar. After all there were so many spiritually awe-inspiring places which he had been offered during his tirtha yatra that were conducive to sadhana. Why not the beautiful cave on the banks of the Ganga at Gangotri, or the secluded stone gumphā at Mount Abu, where it is said that Lord Dattatreya himself performed tapasya, or even the kutiya at Kedarnath?

Now, after a year in which we have seen the unfoldment of a paramahansa, it is easy to understand why this place was chosen for him. Deoghar is ideal in many ways for Sri

Swamiji. Climatically it is very suitable for sadhana. The tortuous summer which is so familiar to Bihar is unknown here. Even on the hottest day the breeze is cool, while in the month of October, which is steaming hot elsewhere, there is a pleasant chill in the air.

Deoghar was once a vast forest. Its only inhabitants were a tribal race known as Santhals, and the entire district was called Santhal Parganas. In 1983 it was declared as an independent district. The land is undulating and surrounded by hills. Gradually the Santhals began clearing the jungles for the cultivation of crops, and later Bengalis came in large numbers to settle here, acquiring land from the Santhals at throwaway prices. It is said that during the Second World War, Marwaris too came here from Calcutta and built vast mansions to keep their jewels and money safe in underground vaults. These houses still exist although in a dilapidated condition.

Historically, Deoghar, which is also known as Baidyanath Dham, finds mention in the *Shiva Purana* which dates it back to the Treta yuga, the era of Lord Rama and Ravana. More recent history dates its development to two hundred years ago when the British first came here. There are several towns named after the British commissioners who were deputed here, and their aristocratic bungalows still remain. The British liked this place. Here they could find respite from the terrible heat of Bihar, and moreover there was ample opportunity for them to indulge in the sport of hunting. It is said that tigers, leopards, elephants and boars roamed freely in the dense jungles of Deoghar.

Geographically, Deoghar is located in the south-east of Bihar (now Jharkhand). Although only one hundred and forty kilometres from Munger there is a world of difference between the two places. Its people are milder and the riots and clashes for which Munger has become so famous are totally absent here. The population consists mainly of Pandas (priests), Santhals and Bengalis. The Pandas were brought here from Mithila by the royal family of Giddaur (Bihar) to conduct the pooja for Lord Shiva.

The central figure around which everything revolves here is of course Baba Baidyanath, the jyotirlinga of Shiva. Carved out of a single rock, its magnificence and power draw lakhs of people to Deoghar for worship. The temple is open to all, no matter which caste, creed or religion they belong. Foreigners are not stopped from entering, as they are in some other tirthas.

A curious fact is that unlike other jyotirlingas, here the black stone slab which forms the jyotirlinga is slightly depressed and the actual linga is absent. The current story is that due to the rubbing of the stone by devotees during worship, the linga has become concave, but the ancient story is that when Ravana was unable to lift the linga off the ground, he rammed his fist into it in anger and frustration, causing a depression in the stone.

There has been some controversy as to whether or not Baba Baidyanath of Deoghar is one of the twelve jyotirlingas mentioned in the Puranas. Some claim that the linga at Baidyanath in Parli, Gujarat, is the actual one. Of course, there has been no research done on this matter. However, the *Shiva Purana* in its description of the twelve jyotirlingas describes it as *Baidyanatham chitabhoomau*: in other words, Baidyanath is the cremation ground or *shmashan bhoomi* of Lord Shiva.

It is no coincidence that Deoghar, too, is known as the *shmashan bhoomi* of Lord Shiva. Legend has it that here he danced his cosmic dance, after which he was named Nataraja. It is believed that even now ash comes out from the land surrounding the mandir, and even bones are found. Sri Swamiji himself, during his tirth yatra of the twelve jyotirlingas, performed worship here. Moreover, one visit to the temple is sufficient to convince anyone that this seat of Lord Shiva is a powerhouse of energy. Narada Muni in his description of Baidyanath Dham to Hanuman describes it as the only place where Lord Shiva grants boons to each and every person whether deserving or undeserving, sinner or saint.

This is also evident from the fact that lakhs and crores of devotees throng here throughout the year. These devotees

include kings, emperors, officials, rich as well as destitute. Even religious saints and sadhus come here in large numbers. At one time it was the base of siddhas, nagas, tantrics and aghoras who practised sadhana here in large numbers. Nowadays their presence has reduced greatly, perhaps due to the fact that those sects have degenerated a great deal. It is a strong belief here that a fake sadhu, or one who practises sadhana for the wrong reasons, will be driven out for some reason or other by the power of Baba Baidyanath. Belief in his omnipresence is so strong amongst people and omnipresent He is! Even in daily life, casually walking the streets, you cannot ignore the rays of divinity emanating from the temple precincts.

There is a curious, if somewhat funny, story about the origin of Baba Baidyanath. Ravana, the famed rakshasa king of the *Ramayana*, who also happened to be a great scholar and accomplished yogi, receives the credit for creating the place. The story is that Ravana was returning to Lanka from Mount Kailash where he had acquired a boon from Shiva after performing austere tapasya for a long period. The boon he received was a jyotirlinga which he was taking back to install at Lanka so that Lord Shiva, his ishta devata, would be eternally present there. However, Lord Shiva placed one condition on Ravana before he gave the linga. He instructed him that this linga should never be put down on the ground en route to Lanka, or else it would not be possible to remove it again. To this Ravana agreed and set off on his journey.

Now all the devas, including Lord Vishnu, became apprehensive about Ravana acquiring such a great power in Lanka as the jyotirlinga of Lord Shiva. They therefore connived to prevent him in some way or the other. Varuna entered his body, on account of which Ravana felt an extreme urge to urinate. So he stopped and, seeing a young Brahmin standing nearby, he gave the boy the linga to hold, instructing him not to put it down until he returned. Ravana took a long time and the boy, who they say was Lord Vishnu himself, put the linga down whereupon it sank into the ground. On his return Ravana found to his dismay that no matter how hard

he tried, the stone would not move an inch. So it stayed there, and the place where it all happened was Deoghar. This is why the place is also known as Ravaneshwar Baidyanath. The spot where Ravana came down to earth is identified with the present Harlajori Mandir; the place where the lingam was deposited is now Deoghar, and the lingam itself is known as Baidyanath.

The name *Deoghar*, which literally means 'home of the gods', is a modern name. In Sanskrit works we find in its place Hridayapeeth, Ravana-vana, Ketaki-vana, Haritaki-vana and Vaidyanatha. The sanctity of Baidyanath is mentioned in several authentic works on pilgrimages dating from the 12th to the 14th century AD. Authentic portions of the Puranas also refer to it, and as they unquestionably pre-date the 10th century, Baidyanath must have attained considerable celebrity even in their time.

Coming to more modern times, there is an interesting account of the pilgrimage to Baidyanath in the *Khulasatu-e-tawarikh*, written between 1695 and 1699 AD. It runs:

In the district of Monghyr on the skirts of the hill, there is a place named the Jharkhand of Baijanath (Baidyanath) sacred to Mahadeva. Here a miraculous manifestation puzzles those who behold only the outside of things. That is to say, in this temple there is a peepal tree, of which nobody knows the origin. If any one of the attendants of the temple is in need of money necessary for his expenses, he abstains from food and drink, sits under the tree and offers prayers to Mahadeva for the fulfilment of his desire. After two or three days the tree puts forth a leaf covered with lines in the Hindi character written by an invisible pen and containing an order on a certain inhabitant of any part of the world for the payment of a certain sum to the person who had prayed for it. Although his residence may be five hundred leagues from Baidyanath, the names of that man and his children, wife, father and grandfather, his quarter, country, home and

other correct details about him are known from the writing on the leaf. The high priest, writing agreeably to it on a separate piece of paper, gives it to that attendant of the temple. This is called the *hundi* (draft) of Baijanath. The supplicant, having taken this draft, goes to the place named on it, according to the directions contained in it. The man upon whom the cheque has been drawn pays the money without attempting evasion or guile. A Brahmin once brought a hundi of Baijnath to the very writer of this book and he, knowing it to be a bringer of good fortune, paid the money and satisfied the Brahmin. More wonderful than this is a cave at this holy place. The high priest enters into the cave once a year on the day of Shiva vrat and, having brought some earth out of it, gives a little to each of the ministers of the temple. Through the power of the truly powerful this earth turns into gold in proportion to the degree of merit of each man. (*India of Aurangzeb 1901*, Jadunath Sarkar)

Sri Swamiji first visited Deoghar in 1956 during his parivrajaka life and then again in 1989 during his pilgrimage of the siddha tirthas. Of course, he has been here several times for the programs sponsored by Sri Anukool Chand Thakur's Satsangnagar and other different organizations such as the Lions Club and the Rotary Club. He describes Baba Baidyanath as the civil court of Lord Shiva where the devotee's prayer is heard and attended to without any delay. He says that it is perhaps the most powerful place for encountering divinity, if only you have eyes to see and the courage to withstand the experience.

Sri Swamiji also says that this *chita bhoomi* (cremation ground) is the seat of Lord Shiva as Aghora. Aghoras are a sect of sadhus to whom nothing is abominable. The word *ghora* literally means 'extreme' and *aghora* means 'not extreme', implying that aghoris through their sadhana go beyond the extremities of nature such as good and bad, dirty and clean, day and night. Aghoris regard Shiva as their

guru. They practise sadhana at the burial ground and are not repulsed or disturbed by dead bodies, the eating of human flesh, the drinking of human blood or that of any animal.

The true aghora has transcended the body and all other forms of matter. The only reality which exists for him is pure consciousness. He exhibits pure vairagya and dispassion towards all material things, and this is reflected externally in his lifestyle. Of course, to the average onlooker an aghora would seem dreadfully bizarre, but he has no regard for the opinion of others. Baidyanath Dham, the chita bhoomi of Shiva, is considered to be a very important centre for aghora sadhana and many aghoris consider it a great accomplishment to be able to perfect their sadhana there.

Another unique but little known fact about Deoghar is that apart from being a Shivasthan, it is also a very important siddha shaktipeeth. Some Puranas ascribe the advent of Baidyanath Dham at Deoghar to the Satya yuga, or the first age of the world when Sati, the consort of Shiva, immolated herself. It is said that when Lord Shiva was carrying the body of his consort Sati, who had immolated herself at the yajna of her father in defiance of his disrespect to her husband, Lord Vishnu, seeing the uncontrollable grief and rage that overcame Shiva, sent forth his sudarshan chakra to dismember her dead body. It was cut into sixty-four pieces, and as Shiva roamed the length and breadth of the universe in wild abandon, different parts of Sati's body fell in different places, which became the sixty-four peeths or important places for worship of Shakti. Her heart fell at Baidyanath Dham and this is known as the hridaya peeth. It is on this very spot that the jyotirlinga was later established. Thus both Shiva and Kali are eternally present here. Every day, first arati and pooja are offered to Devi and then the doors of Baba Baidyanath mandir are opened.

One of the customs which has continued throughout the ages despite strong opposition is the daily sacrifice of a young goat as an offering to the temple. There were many efforts made to stop this practice, especially during the period when



Vaishnavism and Buddhism were a strong force, but the custom has survived. The matter was even brought before the court, but it was settled in favour of the defendants, as they were able to substantiate their arguments by quoting profusely from the shastras in favour of *bali pratha* (living sacrifice). Today the government, being responsible for the upkeep of the temple, pays for the cost of a young goat to be sacrificed daily at the feet of Shiva and his consort Shakti.

Sri Swamiji says that apart from being the most important place for aghora sadhana, Baidyanath Dham or Deoghar comes second only to Kamakhya for tantric sadhana. Tantric sadhana does not only mean the sadhana of pancha tattwa, as most people are inclined to think. In fact, this aspect of tantra has been greatly misinterpreted. There is a very famous song to illustrate this. It is a story about a guru instructing his disciple. He says that the first bhiksha the disciple should get for him is grain, but the disciple should not go near a village or town, or even ask anyone to give it to him. However, it should be brought in abundance. The second bhiksha the guru asks the disciple to get is flesh, but he forbids him to go near any living being. Nor should he bring anyone alive or dead, but he should bring a full bowl. The song continues in this manner and at the end the guru tells the disciple that the meaning of his instructions is highly esoteric and that he who can understand this illuminating couplet is indeed the wisest disciple.

Therefore, in order to understand and apply these sadhanas to oneself, one has to go deep into its esoteric implications without being stalled by its gross interpretations. Just as there is dakshina marga and vama marga in tantra, there is also a third path known as kaula marga, which can be said to be an amalgamation of dakshina and vama margas. Kaula marga was widely practised in Mithila (Bihar) and Orissa in times gone by, and a kaulachari is regarded as the 'real' tantric. In kaula marga, initiation is given within the *kula* or family. The mother initiates the son and daughter; the daughter initiates her husband and children. It is a highly

esoteric practice which only a few now know and practise correctly. In Deoghar there are many kaula margis. Perhaps when the Mithila Brahmins were brought here for worship of the jyotirlinga they brought with them this knowledge or *vidya*. The kaula margis may be householders, but they have a different lifestyle and awareness, being devoted to sadhana and self-realization.

Perhaps the most significant feature of Baba Baidyanath Dham which deserves special mention is the annual Kanwariya mela held in the month of Shravan (July). This is believed to be a highly auspicious time for bathing the jyotirlinga with Ganga water, offering flowers and bel leaves, and praying to Shiva. So ingrained is this belief that crores of devotees, rich and poor alike, walk barefoot from Sultanganj, one hundred and four kilometres away, carrying Ganga jal in their earthen pots. The water is collected from Sultanganj as it is the closest spot to Deoghar where the Ganga flows.

These people are known as *kanwariyas* or the carriers of *kanwar*, which are the earthen pots strung on both sides of a bamboo pole. They are not permitted to place the kanwar on the ground at any point on this journey from Sultanganj to Baba Baidyanath. This is perhaps symbolic of Ravana's mistake in putting Shiva's jyotirlinga on the ground. Mass arrangements are made by the local authorities, resting places are erected and home-guards posted en route to provide any necessary assistance. Medical relief is also provided. In fact, the whole place comes alive in the month of Shravan as the saffron-clad devotees walk through the winding paths chanting 'Bol Bam!' all the way to their destination.

Deoghar, too, comes alive at this time. The whole place caters to these kanwariyas who are regarded as the guests of Shiva. No kanwariya has returned disappointed or disillusioned in his staunch faith in Baba Baidyanath. It is believed that the wish of each and every person is fulfilled. Therefore, one must always be cautious when approaching this jyotirlinga, for in your ignorance you may ask for what is not really intended for you.

There is also a special type of kanwariya known as the 'Dak Bam'. He is the express train as opposed to the others who are like the passenger trains stopping at each junction. He walks non-stop and covers the entire distance in one stretch, resting only after he prostrates at the feet of Lord Shiva. The champion to date is a girl of eighteen years who completed the one hundred and four kilometre journey in twelve hours only to attain moksha at the feet of Lord Shiva.

There are several spiritual places to visit in and around Deoghar, but one which deserves special mention is Vasukinath, twenty-five kilometres to the east of Deoghar on the Dumka road. About Vasukinath Sri Swamiji says that, if Baidyanath is the civil court of Lord Shiva, Vasukinath is the criminal court. He tells us of his disciple who had an incurable skin disease which had become so rampant that the man had to remain inside a mosquito net twenty-four hours a day to prevent flies and insects from sitting on his infected and sore skin. All medicines and doctors had failed. As a last resort he accompanied Sri Swamiji to Vasukinath with a vow that he would perform dharana there until he received the blessings of Shiva. He stayed there for three nights, sleeping on the floor outside the temple. On the third night in a dream he saw the name of the medicine that would cure him, along with the doctor who would prescribe it. He later recovered completely. The doctor also told him that he had received many patients sent by Lord Vasukinath.

So many miracles of this sort have occurred at Vasukinath that to recount them would be well-nigh impossible. Here Lord Shiva is known as Nag Nath, the king of serpents, which is considered to be one of the most powerful aspects personified in him. As king of the serpents he represents one who has tamed the cosmic consciousness. Thereby he is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. These are the qualities attributed to God. Devotees are known to crawl the full distance from Sultanganj to Vasukinath in obeisance to Nag Nath. If you have seen this sight, you will realize what a

great tapasya it is to be able to do that, more so because these are not sadhus or tapasvis but ordinary householders who do not have the basic training and discipline that is required to perform tapasya. They simply do it out of shraddha and devotion.

The temple itself is austere and imposing, made more dramatic and inspiring by its solitary surroundings. It is said in the Puranas that this territory was inhabited by rakshasas who were continuously harassing other tribes in that region. At one stage these rakshasas became so powerful that they even abducted the king of the chief tribe. The king, who was a bhakta of Lord Shiva, remembered him with so much devotion that Lord Shiva appeared before him along with Parvati and granted him the Pashupat weapon which made him invincible, thus enabling him to kill all the rakshasas.

Legend has it that this lingam was accidentally discovered at this spot by a man known as Vasuki, who struck it while searching for herbs. As he hit the stone, blood emerged and, terror-stricken, Vasuki prayed to Lord Shiva to pardon him for his mistake. Shiva not only pardoned him, but said that the place would thereafter be known not as Nag Nath but as Vasukinath in acknowledgement of his devotion. Vasukinath is a very important place of sadhana for tantrics. Many great tantric siddhas have lived there from time to time.

### **History of Rikhia**

The name *Rikhia* is derived from the word *rishi* which means 'seer'. At one time this area was dense forest. No one dared to roam or loiter about. This attracted many rishis to the place as they always preferred to remain in solitude to practise their sadhana. So Rikhia was a place where rishis used to live.

Sri Aurobindo lived here before he set off for his mission in Pondicherry. Sri Rabindranath Tagore had chosen this place for his university which was later founded at Bolpur and named Shantiniketan. Mahatma Gandhi had an ashram here which was visited by all great Indian leaders of the freedom movement. The *mukhia* or chief of Rikhia, Sri Taranath

Mukherjee, ninety-eight years of age (in 1991), has lived here since the age of nineteen, having abandoned the comforts of life in an aristocratic family, in pursuit of his ideals and principles. He vividly paints for us the history of Rikhia in the last one hundred years. It is a strange coincidence, he tells us, that about fifty or sixty years ago a sannyasin by the name of Satyananda (whose guru was also Swami Sivananda of Ramakrishna Math) came to live here in seclusion. He was a very accomplished and dynamic sadhu, but had renounced everything to practise his sadhana in this place.

### **Sri Panch Dashnam Paramahamsa Alakh Bara**

Today Rikhia is a little hamlet containing many villages, including Pania Pagar where the sadhana sthal of Sri Swamiji is situated. Sri Swamiji had once said that when choosing a place to live, a sadhu should have only one consideration in mind, and that is an abundance of water. A roof above the head is not as important as a plentiful supply of water. The name is therefore befitting. *Pania Pagar* means 'plentiful water'. In Pania Pagar is the sadhana sthal of Sri Swamiji, which is known as Sri Panch Dashnam Paramahamsa Akhara. The Sri Panch are Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Devi and Ganesha. These five form the *darbar* (court) of the Sri Panch and are the main protagonists of the vedic tradition. It is to them that the function of everything in the universe is attributed, its creation, sustenance and destruction. They are the *poorna avatars* (complete manifestations). They also have *amsa avatars* (partial manifestations) which are their own creations, but their functions are limited. The Sri Panch and their subsidiaries form the entire range of gods and goddesses of the vedic pantheon. They denote varying levels of consciousness.

In the vedic and tantric tradition it is a common practice to represent these deities in symbolic form. Thus every god and goddess has its own particular symbol in the form of mantra, yantra and mandala. To invoke a certain deity, meditation on its symbol is sufficient. The Sri Panch of Paramahamsa Akhara are symbolized by a conch, which

represents Vishnu, a *kalash* (earthen pot) for Brahma, and a trident or *trishul* for Mahesh. Devi and Ganesha are symbolized by their yantras. These form the Paramahansa Akhara logo.

The word *dashnam* represents the order of sannyasa which was founded by Adiguru Shankaracharya. It includes ten sects of sannyasins, one of them being Saraswati to which Sri Swamiji belongs. The Saraswatis are devoted to vidya and learning.

The word *paramahansa* represents the vidya imparted to Sri Swamiji at the time of initiation into sannyasa. Sri Swamiji applied this knowledge to himself in a practical manner soon after it was imparted to him by his guru. Even then it seemed the most natural way of life to him, but his guru Swami Sivananda had instructed him that he should first complete the mission of propagating the science of yoga “ . . . from door to door and from shore to shore”, and when that was accomplished he could return to the paramahansa way of life.

The word *akhara* represents an abode of sadhus. It is not a Sanskrit word. There is no reference to this word in the chronicles of Adiguru Shankaracharya or even Lord Dattatreya, who were both greatly responsible for initiating large numbers of sannyasins and forming them into different sects and orders. Sri Swamiji says that it is perhaps a short form of *alakh bara*, which means ‘isolated or invisible house’, denoting that sadhus stayed mostly in isolated places. The word ‘akhara’ is also used for a place where wrestling and other physical exercises are taught and practised. The nagas, who are a militant group of sadhus, perhaps coined this word, for martial warfare is a part of their training, and the place where they lived and practised this art was therefore known as akhara. Each and every naga sadhu is accomplished in horse riding, archery and wielding the spear or *bhalla*, and to uphold and protect the cause of Dharma they are even known to use their trishuls as a lethal weapon. It is believed that the trishul of a naga is a boon he has received from Shiva.

An akhara is not an ashram. An ashram is a place of *shram* or labour where a sannyasin perfects his body, mind, emotions and spirit. It is open to anyone who has spiritual aspirations, whether sannyasin or not. Devotees may come and live there from time to time to imbibe a higher understanding of life. Here yoga and other spiritual sciences are taught.

An akhara on the other hand is a place where a sannyasin who has perfected himself consolidates his learning and gives it a momentum to attain greater spiritual heights. In order to achieve this end he prefers to remain in seclusion so that whatever *vrat* or vow he has taken is not disturbed. It is for this reason that visitors are prohibited from staying at the akhara.

During the period of sadhana a sadhu does not give *upadesh* (guidance), *darshan* (physical presence), or even *diksha* (initiation), and therefore devotees become an obstacle on his path of sadhana. Sri Swamiji has always said that the only difficulty he faces in his sadhana is the constant stream of visitors who wish to have his darshan. He has no problem with the body, mind, emotions or spirit; they are all firmly set on the path of self-realization, but the frequent *darshanarthis* do pose a problem, as meeting them causes a break in his sadhana.

Sri Swamiji says, "I have nothing more to say to anyone and no further guidance to give. For twenty-six or more years I have lived with the people answering their questions and helping them on their spiritual path. Now I withdraw my responsibility. Those who are receptive, they will surely benefit from what I have told them, but those who are not, they will now have to find their own way."

We cannot underestimate the truth of his words. For Sri Swamiji has indeed said it all. There is no topic which he has not elucidated for us, and these are all available in his books. Now his role is a more universal one. If we want to reach out to him, it should be through the medium of the spirit and not through the body and the mind, which is just a gross

relationship. The true relationship between guru and disciple is one where the spirits commune. Yet everyone clamours for physical darshan of the guru, not realizing that the real spiritual accomplishment is when the disciple can commune with the guru even if he is not physically present. This is what we have to strive for, as this is the only abiding relationship with guru.

### **Akshara purascharana**

For Sri Swamiji, sadhana is a way of life which consumes his entire day. It is not restricted to just a few hours when he sits down for his practices. Each and every aspect of life is taken into account and altered or re-orientated to meet with the demands of his sadhana. For most of us, sadhana means a few hours when we shut ourselves off from life and its demands, to rejuvenate ourselves spiritually. It is something like sinning the whole week long and then going to confession to absolve oneself from one's sins and get ready for the next week of sinning.

However, in truth that is not how it is. For sadhana, one has to be resolute, strong, courageous and disciplined. Every act and every event is viewed from the perspective of one's sadhana and not as independent from it. Only then does sadhana transform itself into realization. After all, Sri Swamiji's life has been one of great accomplishment throughout. He has excelled in every field – as a disciple, as a guru, as an administrator, and as an adept of yoga and tantra. There is no sadhana that he has not done. He has lived like a beggar and also like a king. Lakshmi bestowed on him immense wealth, Saraswati bestowed on him vidya, Kali bestowed on him cosmic awareness, and Durga bestowed on him immense spiritual power. There was simply no need for him to abandon or renounce what he had created and live here in Deoghar so austere.

However, Sri Swamiji says that when he left his home for sannyasa, the burning desire was for self-realization at the feet of his guru. It was not for amassing wealth, of which he



already had plenty, that he left his home, not for building an ashram or making disciples and attaining name and fame. He simply accomplished that as a duty and service to his guru. There are obligations in the life of every individual which he has to fulfil. If he does not perform them, they will catch up with him someday. These obligations, which also apply to a sannyasin, are known as *pitri rin* (obligations to ancestors), *deva rin* (obligations to the divine beings) and *guru rin* (obligations to guru). Bihar School of Yoga was Sri Swamiji's fulfilment of his guru rin.

A sannyasin essentially belongs to no one. He has renounced everything to take sannyasa. This renunciation is total. From the day he takes his sannyasa his entire being – the body, mind, emotions and spirit are dedicated to guru and the Divine. They may use him as they will. Just as an alert dog lies idle the whole day but immediately comes alive when he hears his master's command, in the same way a sannyasin pursues activities but is always alert and ready for the command. It may or may not come, but if and when it does, then the sannyasin abandons everything that he has absorbed himself in, no matter how important it may be.

This precisely explains the developments in Sri Swamiji's life over the past years. He created Bihar School of Yoga at the command of his guru and the guidance he received from his ishta devata. When the next command came he abandoned what he had created to fulfil it. Sri Swamiji says, "I am simply a servant; if another command comes, I will leave even this. It does not matter. And none should mourn the loss of their guru. I even abandoned the mantle of guru the day I left Munger. If you people want more guidance, you may go to Munger or search for some mahatma or sadhu. Do not come to me; I am a sadhaka."

Moreover, he says, that if the Akhara were to function like an ashram where a sadhu gives darshan and upadesha to the devotees, then he may as well have stayed in Munger. Life in an akhara has to be different. It is an esoteric life, and therefore to experience it fully one has to be internalized and

constantly aware of atman. So it can be said that an ashram is a sort of training ground for a sannyasin where he prepares himself physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, while an akhara is the testing ground where the metal is tried, checked and tested.

It is true that the akharas you may have visited are not of this kind. Most akharas function more in the manner of maths and institutions. One reason for this could be that often when the mahatma of the akhara left his *gaddi* (seat) there was no other person of his calibre to maintain the disciplines. There are several akharas in remote and inaccessible places, but they are frequented by sadhus only for the period of their sadhana, and later they too migrate to more populated areas.

Sri Swamiji has in his own way revived this very important tradition of an akhara. For it is only in seclusion that a yogi or mahatma attains spiritual heights. All our epics and shastras mention rishis, munis, sadhus and mahatmas who had hermitages in dense forests or way up in the hills. These hermitages were concealed or camouflaged by nature, and kings and emperors would accidentally discover them while out on a hunt. Most often the emperor would enter the hermitage to pay obeisance to the mahatma. If the mahatma was in samadhi, he did not give his physical darshan, no matter how important the visitor may have been. However, it was considered a great privilege to at least have darshan of the *bhoomi* or earth on which the mahatma was performing his sadhana. That was the feeling, the ground itself became sacred. It is the same feeling as when you enter a temple. You do not physically 'see' God, but you are able to feel His presence.

Sri Swamiji remains outdoors throughout the year during the summer and winter months. It is only during the four months of *chaturmas* (July to October) that he performs purascharana in his thatched kutiya. At other times he remains near his dhuni, which is called the Mahakaal Chita Dhuni, or else at the *vedi* (altar) where he performs panchagni

vidya. Sri Swamiji laughingly says that here is an emperor with a different apartment for every season.

The essential sadhana which Sri Swamiji does is akshara purascharana although the basis may differ according to the season. For instance, in winter, akshara purascharana is performed through the medium of pranayama and in summer the medium is panchagni sadhana, which is not known to us, but which according to his passing remarks is based on higher pranayama.

Akshara purascharana is the sadhana prescribed in the shastras for this yuga. It is based on the principles of nada, kala and bindu, which according to tantra are the basis and substratum of this universe. Akshara purascharana, especially if performed by a siddha, mahatma or tapasvi, purifies many levels of existence.

During sadhana a yogi does not exist in this time and space. He travels into infinity and can influence and restructure different realms unknown and unseen by the average person. This is why it is essential for a sadhu to have attained a sattwic nature before he enters into such sadhana, so that positive vibrations are felt. This purification can be felt at all levels, the physical, mental and spiritual. So although a tapasvi remains aloof from society, we cannot say that he does not contribute anything to it. It may be a subtle contribution, but it is an eternal one which will survive the ravages of time.

### **Panchagni sadhana**

*Panchagni vidya* is the endurance of five fires. Sri Swamiji performed it in an open air vedi. Four dhunis were kindled with wood in obeisance to Agni devata and the fifth dhuni is Surya devata. These external fires symbolize the five internal ones raging in man: *kama* (passion), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *mada* (ego) and *moha* (attachment). Sri Swamiji says that only he who can withstand these five internal fires is able to withstand the external fires, or vice versa.

This vidya is referred to in the *Katha Upanishad* where it is described by Yama, the Lord of Death, to the young

Nachiketa. The rites and rituals of this vidya are *gupta* (secret) known only to a few, as it gives insight and awareness into higher spiritual realms, bestowing immortality on the yogi who practises it. It is intended only for those who have perfect vairagya such as Nachiketa. Befittingly, Swami Sivananda, in his epithet on Sri Swamiji dated 26th July 1954, has likened him to Nachiketa:

Few would have such vairagya at such a young age. Swami Satyananda is full of the Nachiketa element. Yet, any work that he takes up he will complete in a perfect manner. He does the work of four people and yet never complains. He is a versatile genius and a linguist too. Yet, he is humble and simple – an ideal sadhaka and Nishkama sevak . . .

Parvati, the wife of Lord Shiva, practised this vidya to attain union with Shiva. Thereby she is depicted as the eternal consort of Siva. Lord Dattatreya, an avadhoota paramahamsa who is venerated as an incarnation of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, also performed panchagni. Sharada Devi, the consort of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, is also known to have done this sadhana.

It is said that when Parvati practised panchagni, she remembered the Lord throughout, chanting his name. Hot gusts of wind blew, huge trees fell down with the wind, but she was lost in remembrance of Shiva. The external disturbances did not unbalance her awareness. In the same way, internally too, a strong wave of anger or passion, greed or attachment can suddenly arise and totally unbalance a person who is not firmly rooted in sadhana.

The divinity inherent in Nature can be strongly felt in the Akhara. The sun, moon, stars and, most importantly, the seasons and the wind play a very important role during panchagni sadhana. Therefore, according to certain scriptures this sadhana is only intended for one who has the pancha tattwas under their control. Rikhia is especially noted for its frequent changes of weather, sometimes within the

hour. In one day you can have darshan of all four seasons, and the hurricanes here are enough to blow you off the ground. Therefore, a yogi who practises panchagni has first to make friends with *agni* (fire), *vayu* (air), *jal* (water), *prithvi* (earth) and *akasha* (ether).

### **Arrival in Rikhia**

Sri Swamiji first arrived in Rikhia on 23rd September 1989. It was a perfect day. Night and day were in equal balance, i.e. twelve hours of day and twelve hours of night, a phenomenon which occurs only twice a year. His first anushthana commenced on 30th October 1989 during Ashwin Navaratri. The day before his anushthana began Sri Swamiji called the few sannnyasins present at the akhara to see the magnificent sight of a thick, twelve-foot long geru-coloured nag serpent, which did *parikrama* (circumambulation) of the entire property and disappeared into a tree at the centre of the Akhara. It is no coincidence that this event was revealed in a dream before it occurred. As this was a highly auspicious sign, a murti of Swami Sivananda and one of Adiguru Shankaracharya have been installed near this spot. During his tirth yatra it was in Vasukinath that Poojya Swamiji had the darshan of Nag Nath coiled around his neck, saying, "Become a chakravarti."

In Sri Swamiji's own words:

*In Vasukinath, as I lay under a shady tree,  
I had a dream vision  
Of a hooded serpent coiled around my neck  
And the clear instruction, "Become a Chakravarti."*

### **Mahakaal Chita Dhuni**

Soon after Sri Swamiji arrived at Rikhia he lit a dhuni or fire and called it Mahakaal Chita Dhuni. It is fuelled by wood. In the Akhara there are two types of dhunis. They are known as tapa dhuni and pooja dhuni. The tapa dhuni is lit with wood and burns all the twenty-four hours of the day in rain and in sunshine. It is the tapasya dhuni which

consumes and purifies everything. Sri Swamiji even cooks his food at this dhuni.

The pooja dhuni on the other hand is lit with specially prepared *goytha* (cow-dung). This dhuni is lit only during purascharana. It is smokeless and emits a subtle fragrance which is very purifying. Goytha and wood are thus the food consumed by the Akhara and Sri Swamiji often calls himself the 'goytha paramahansa'.

Amongst sadhus, lighting a dhuni is a very ancient tradition. It marks a very significant stage in his life. The dhunis of great siddhas such as Gorakhnath, Lord Dattatreya and others are known to have miraculous powers and they are preserved even till today. It is believed that due to its sanctity, the ash from a sadhu's dhuni is very potent. This is understandable, because once a sadhu lights a dhuni, through his seva and nurturing he gives it life. His entire day is spent in front of the dhuni and all his acts are performed with Agni as *sakshi* or witness.

In the vedic and tantric traditions Agni is always an important part of any ritual, be it social, cultural, religious or spiritual. Even in marriages it is Agni who confers the title of man and wife on the couple. When Sita had to prove her honour after being rescued from Lanka, it was Agni that she had to pass through. Just as today all court proceedings are commenced only after the witness swears before the *Bhagavad Gita* that he will speak nothing but the truth, in earlier days people swore by Agni. It was sincerely believed that one cannot lie or do any misdeed before Agni.

A yogi lights a dhuni with this idea in mind, that the dhuni is sakshi to each and every thought, word and deed of his. If these are not sattwic, he will not be able to withstand the test of Agni. In practice, too, this has become evident in the Akhara, because as soon as Sri Swamiji lit the Mahakaal Chita Dhuni, all other aspects of the Akhara began to fall into shape and take form.

The Akhara has its own unique set of instruments which are multi-purpose. They can be used for pooja and worship,

for self-protection, for cutting, cooling and eating as well as for tending the dhuni. Some are just ornamental, others are used during sadhana or for conferring spiritual power on others. They may or may not ever be used, but as per the tradition a sadhu must keep them in his possession and perform the ritual pooja of these items. They include the *bhalla* (spear), *dhanush baan* (bow), *yoga danda*, *vyaghra charm* (leopard skin), *mriga charm* (deerskin), *shankha* (conch), *damaru* (small drum), *nagara* (big drum) and Parashurama's axe.

One should not underestimate these possessions of a yogi. In the Vedas we find references to mantras used by rishis to transfer power to a blade of kusha grass, which transformed it into a lethal weapon. A yogi can do this with his trishul, *chimta* (tongs) and other instruments. One knows of siddha nagas who can cause cancer to occur if they strike someone with their trishul or yoga danda. Any item in the sadhu's possession can even bestow spiritual power and material gain on others.

It is through satsang that these acquire the power of invincibility. The *Srimad Bhagavata* elucidates that the shankha has become a venerated symbol only due to the fact that it is forever in the satsang of Lord Vishnu. *Satsang* means 'association with the truth' and it is perhaps the most important factor for spiritual transformation. It is through satsang that our spiritual samskaras are nurtured and transformed. In the same way the possessions of a sadhu are transformed through the satsang they receive.

In the Akhara it is the damaru and shankha which are used most often. The damaru represents Shiva and shankha is a symbol of Vishnu. Sri Swamiji commences his sadhana with the rattle of the damaru and the roar of the conch. At the sound of the damaru, tamas flees, and when the conch is blown, sattwa awakens. The damaru is also used every morning at 4 am during the pooja of the Rudraksha tree, and the conch for the pooja of Tulsi Mai.

The ishta devi of the akhara is Tulsi Mai. She is the benevolent force presiding over all the lokas. Sri Swamiji

himself performs *snaan* (bath) and pooja of Tulsi Mai daily. The shastras enumerate certain trees which are the natural abode of devatas. Each devata has a tree which he is known to favour. These trees possess divine qualities. Just as modern biology tells us of fruit-bearing and medicinal trees, the scriptures speak of a group of such trees that can invoke the descent of devatas. These trees greatly enhance the purity of the atmosphere, thus increasing the spiritual vibrations of the surroundings. The Akhara has trees of only this quality and they are worshipped daily.

There is a touching story about Bal Krishna when he forbade his mother to perform yajna in obeisance to Lord Indra. He asked, “Why do you pray to Indra? He is not worthy of it. He has a terrible temper and is vindictive too. If you annoy him he will cause famine and destruction by obstructing the seasons. You should pray to the trees who, without being asked, give you fruit to eat and wood to light your fire. You should pray to the earth or bhoomi which gives you the soil to grow grain and food to eat, or the cows which give you milk to drink. They are worthy of prayer.”

In Sanskrit, trees are known as *vriksha* and are definitely worthy of veneration, for we greatly depend on them. The ritual of invoking the divine in a tree is known as *devata avahana*. These trees then act as a protective force, aiding the yogi in sadhana. After all, it is not only the physical realm which a yogi has to encounter on the path of sadhana. There are many deeper and higher realms on the psychic and causal levels. Negative forces exist even in these realms and they are more difficult to counteract because their powers are unlimited. When the yogi transcends this mind and soars high into infinity, he can easily become a victim to these forces. It is then that the divine forces rush to his aid and help him in his sadhana. The same principle applies during the worship of yantra and mandala where the devatas position themselves in the outer protective covering or *bhupura* to prevent any negative forces from jeopardizing the sadhaka's experience of the Divine.



Sri Swamiji remains alone in the Akhara. His sole companions are two ferocious dogs. Dogs are regarded as the *vahana* or carriers of Bhairav devata. Just as Garuda, the eagle, is the carrier of Vishnu, and Nandi, the bull, is the carrier of Shiva, dogs are the carriers of Bhairav Nath. At all important Shiva temples you will find Bhairav Nath in the outer precincts. You first have to pay obeisance to the security officer and then to Lord Shiva. These two security officers of Sri Swamiji are known as Bhola Nath and Bhairavi Nath. They remain around Sri Swamiji the whole day guarding him, his dhuni and *mandap* (raised platform). They object strongly if anyone dares to enter that area. At the sound of his damaru and shankha they know that he has commenced his sadhana, and after rushing to him for their customary biscuits, they position themselves near the vedi. They will eat from no one else but Sri Swamiji and are on duty twenty-four hours of the day. They are beautiful and lovable too.

In alertness there is no other animal which can surpass the dog. He is duty-bound and loyal too, but the most important lesson one may learn from them is their innocence. They are totally devoid of raga and dwesha. They have one master. This is why Sri Swamiji has often said that a disciple should be like a dog: loyal, obedient and serving only one master. Certainly they must have good karma to their credit to have been chosen for Sri Swamiji's service.

### **Lifestyle of a paramahamsa**

Here in the Akhara one has seen another important transition in the lifestyle of Sri Swamiji. He has given up the geru cloth and donned the *kaupen* or loincloth. This too is a very important hallmark in the life of a sadhu, for it denotes that vairagya and dispassion are an inherent part of his being. In the shastras the person who dons a kaupen and accepts a begging bowl is verily Shiva himself. It is also said that a disciple who has the good fortune to touch the kaupen of his guru is thrice blessed, for it can give him instant liberation.

Sri Swamiji says that there will come a stage when he will give up even the loincloth.

Since he arrived at the Akhara Sri Swamiji has never stepped out. He says, "Here I will live like a paramahansa who has nothing to do with the world." A paramahansa lives simply with the minimum possible material comforts. His bed is the bare grass and his clothing his own natural skin. He eats little, living on a frugal diet he prepares himself. He does not give upadesha, jnana or diksha, nor does he pose as a great mahatma, but rather he lives away from the glare of public life. This is justifiable in the sense that a paramahansa, or rather one who has attained paramahansa consciousness, attains divine qualities. However, these siddhis are not meant to be flaunted and capitalized on by drawing large crowds. They are meant rather for the fulfilment of spiritual goals.

It is said in the *Narada Parivrajakopnishad*:

In this world, very rare is the mendicant monk who is a paramahansa. If there is one, he is ever pure. He alone is the Purusha glorified in the Vedas. He who is a great man (*mahapurusha*) has his mind resting in me, I too remain in him alone. He is the ever-satisfied. He is free from the effects of cold and heat, happiness and misery, honour and dishonour. He puts up with insult and anger. He is devoid of the six human infirmities (hunger and thirst, sorrow and delusion, old age and death) and free from the six properties of the body (birth, existence, change, growth, decay and death). Excepting the self he sees nothing else. Unclad, bowing to none, not uttering *svaha*, not uttering *svadha*, free from blame and praise, not resorting to mantras and rituals (*karma kanda*) not meditating on other gods (than the Supreme God), with all the activities ceased, firmly established in Consciousness consisting of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, being conscious of the one Supreme Bliss, he ever meditates on the Brahma pranava, that he is Brahman alone, and thus fulfils himself. Such a one is the Paramahansa mendicant monk.

There are four stages of sannyasa: bahudak, kutichak, hamsa and paramahamsa. *Bahudak* signifies the stage when a sannyasin lives as a disciple in service of the guru. After serving the guru, when he enters parivrajaka life, he is known as *kutichak*. *Hamsa* is the stage when he interacts with the world, fulfilling the mission of his guru yet remaining unspoiled by it, in much the same way as a swan which remains in water but does not ever become wet. *Paramahamsa*, the last stage, is the culmination of all that he has accomplished spiritually.

Paramahamsa no doubt is an order into which sannyasins are initiated, but more importantly it is a state of consciousness. Every paramahamsa you encounter may not have attained that consciousness, but he has at least taken a step in the right direction by being initiated into the tradition. Of course, there have been paramahamsas who have attained this state, but they are few and far between. Most others only rigidly observe the rules and codes of conduct of that tradition without ever attaining the paramahamsa consciousness.

One who has attained that state goes beyond the boundaries of tradition. He is a liberated being. Of course, he will never deny the importance of tradition because he is aware that a traditionless society can lead to anarchy and disruption. This is true in sannyasa also. Today self-styled sadhus are in abundance, but if we examine them closely, we find that their goals are more material than spiritual. Many even think of sannyasa as a career. This happens when one makes a break from tradition. The sannyasa tradition demands that one has to undergo twelve years training under the guru's guidance, after which he wanders freely on his own, applying to himself all that he has learnt as well as examining his strengths and weaknesses. When he is firmly grounded in his dedication to spiritual life, he settles down in one place and propagates the spiritual sciences that he has learnt and also perfected. This service to society is rendered with *nishkama bhava* (without personal desire). When this task is accomplished he retires into seclusion.

Many people have questioned the need for Sri Swamiji to do all these sadhanas and live in austerity when he has already proven his spiritual calibre. In answer Sri Swamiji says that apart from being the best way of life and one that he finds most fulfilling, he is also aware that if he does not set this example, others after him will take the liberty of proclaiming themselves paramahamsas without ever having undergone the disciplines necessary for attaining that state. It is out of his infinite compassion and grace that he is paving the guidelines for sincere sannyasins to emulate in the future.

As per tradition, a paramahamsa lives on *bhiksha*. He does not accept *dakshina*. There is a subtle difference between the two. *Dakshina* is an offering which the devotee wants to offer to a sadhu. It may or may not be of use to him but he is obliged to accept it. In *bhiksha* the sadhu demands from the devotee only what he requires, nothing more or nothing less. This is known as the practice of *aparigraha*, non-possession of material objects, and it is essential for a sadhu.

A paramahamsa lives in a rapturous embrace with the Divine. His consciousness is very refined. He is able to control it at will, and direct it to different places at one time. He exhibits a balanced perception of the dualities of life such as pain and pleasure, good and bad, etc. Through all this he remains a *sakshi* or witness. Such a person attains immortality.

The great epic *Mahabharata* describes a paramahamsa as an ascetic of the highest order, who has subdued his senses through abstract meditation. Abstract meditation is a very difficult art to master. We are all familiar with the concept of meditation on a particular symbol. Although seemingly difficult, it is far easier than meditation on an abstraction such as a thought or an idea or the void. Meditation on anything that does not have form is abstract meditation, and if you are not an adept at handling the mind as well as the entire consciousness raging within you, then you will lose yourself in distraction.

Moreover, this form of dhyana is a very advanced stage of yoga as it is not possible to accomplish if the senses have not been subdued. Subduing the senses does not mean suppressing them. It is not possible to subdue the senses through suppression. This will only lead to deformity in the human personality and behaviour.

The senses are ruled by the tattwa of fire. They are ignited even by the tiniest spark and they rage high within man. To try to suppress fire is like playing with dynamite. Therefore, when they say that a paramahamsa has subdued his senses they do not mean that he has suppressed them. Rather he has withstood that fire and transcended its effect on the body, mind, emotions and spirit.

This is precisely why certain sadhanas such as *shmathan sadhana* (sadhana practised in the cremation ground), *lata sadhana* (sadhana practised with a young girl), *aghora sadhana* (eating of flesh, blood, faeces) is prescribed for a yogi, so that he may gauge the extent to which he has been able to master himself. These practices are not black magic or debauchery. They may appear to be so but that is purely the outlook of an onlooker who does not have the awareness to understand.

Imagine then what sort of awareness a paramahamsa would have. In Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* it is mentioned that the mind rests on, or has for its support, the pancha vrittis of which some are painful and others not. When these five vrittis of the mind are negated, the mind is said to dissolve, but dissolution of mind is not the final goal, for with dissolution of mind one loses awareness. In order to go a step further one has to maintain inner awareness despite the dissolution of the mind. This is a great accomplishment, and a paramahamsa is known to have attained this state.

Etymologically *paramahamsa* means 'supreme swan'. In the shastras the swan is allegorized as having the special ability to extract the true essence from all things. It is able to separate the milk from a mixture of milk and water. A paramahamsa is also known to possess this quality. Moreover, the swan symbolizes *chetana* or 'refined awareness', which knows

all. Thus it is said that a paramahansa lives in supreme awareness. This is a very exalted state which for most of us is even difficult to conceive, let alone experience.

In all of us there is a mortal awareness that dies and an immortal awareness that is eternal. This eternal awareness exhibits itself in varying degrees of refinement in all animate and inanimate objects, including human beings. In evolved souls it reveals itself as radiance and light, thereby creating an aura of divinity around them. It is this immortal awareness that will determine your experiences after death. If you have not cared to awaken it during your lifetime, then after death, destiny prevails, but if it is awakened then you yourself can determine your destiny in life and after death. That is why evolved souls such as yogis, mahatmas and siddhas can guide us even after they have left their mortal frames.

Any acts that such persons perform will have a divine quality and purpose. This is because the samskaras of such individuals are burnt and they live only to fulfil the Divine Will. They can therefore reflect and radiate divinity. They may act human, they may look human, but no matter what they do they will stand out as extraordinary beings. Rama was such a man. So, too, was Krishna. We know very well that they walked on this earth as we do. They lived the span of human life, undergoing its joys and sorrows as we do, and yet they are revered as God even today. This is because they exhibited that so called 'radiance of divinity' in their each and every act, which is responsible for the fact that even centuries later it is believed that their birth on this earth had a divine purpose.

It is these divine incarnations and illuminated beings who pave the way for the future generations by setting an example for them. In difficult times we can draw inspiration from them. Sri Swamiji, too, has set an example that all of us can at least aspire for, even if we cannot emulate him. From his early childhood he showed an extraordinary genius born out of his immense vairagya. His accomplishments never caused him to swerve from his goal of attaining the beauties of sannyasa and

renunciation. He exhibited a natural tendency to be familiar with and at ease in any situation. When he directed the Bihar School of Yoga, it was with perfection and intuition, guiding thousands of souls all over the world in their striving for perfection in life and beyond. Today, as an ascetic, far from the glitter and glamour of gurudom, he shows the same élan and ease. It is not common to find a guru who renounces his gaddi and names his successor in his own lifetime. In living memory we cannot cite any example of this kind. Yet Sri Swamiji has done it, for his goal is firmly set on the divine path . . .





Poems by  
Swami Dharmashakti



## *Jaya Jaya Jaya Satyam*

*(Expressions of an overflowing heart at Uttarkashi during the return journey from Gangotri, on the day of Ganga Dussehra)*

We saw and recognized  
The divine heart of this sannyasin.

The glow of the sun on his face  
And the cool serenity of the moon.  
His words the nectarine flow of the sacred Ganga  
His smile the enchantment of flowers in bloom.

In his heart the immortal belief of world brotherhood  
In his mind sublime thoughts of prayer, kirtan and japa.  
Transforming inner and outer lives of multitudes  
Glory to the guru, who is verily Rama and Krishna.

Glory to Almora, his blessed birthplace  
Jaya jaya jaya Satyam, the great saint of this age.  
Every corner of the world is luminous  
With the notes of this song celestial.

I too saw and recognized  
The spiritual jewel, this sannyasin.  
My revered, my father, guru and master  
Accept the pranaams that I humbly bow and offer.

—9th June 1956



## *You Alone shall Light the Lamp*

*(After receiving Swami Sivananda's darshan and blessings, in a state of high fever and delirium on 8th September 1956)*

What a beautiful moment in time . . .  
All have recognized that Satyam is divine . . .

The world today is full of godmen  
Who spread the net of deceit and pretence  
Making the innocent their easy prey  
Beguiling them with smooth talk, leading them astray.

This mirage of the world  
Satyam watched with a soul much troubled  
He resolved to rent asunder  
The thick veil of deception and imposture.

Afar on the Himalayan peaks  
Full of compassion, he understood humanity's grief.  
And thus with a heavy heart he bid adieu  
To the sacred Ganga and the lotus feet of guru.

The feet that his mind always turned to,  
The sage he had dedicated himself to  
Only one boon he asked of him  
May satya and dharma fill this world to the brim.

May all follow one creed, sing one name of the Lord  
No room for high and low, for dispute or discord,  
No brahmin or untouchable, no sin or merit  
We are all children of the one Father,  
no matter our name or deed.

The guru laughed and said,  
'You alone shall light the lamp'.  
With 'satya' and 'dharma' as your path's beacons  
You will realize and attain 'Alakh Niranjan'.

*—10th September 1956*

## *Bhavanjali*

We only hear there once lived Lord Rama,  
Never have we seen Krishna either  
Yet we all sing of their greatness and grandeur.

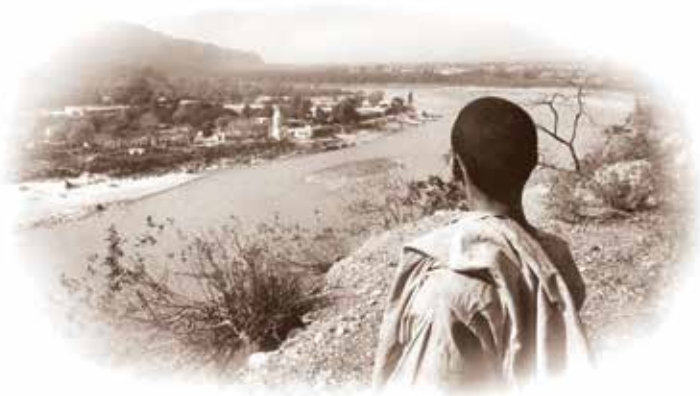
No one has seen the splendour of Indra  
Or the penance of Vishwamitra  
The scriptures alone recount their saga . . .

Renouncing home, hearth and all else,  
A renowned doctor became Sage Sivananda,  
A Jagat Guru leading all to the path of satya . . .

On the road to Lake Mansarovar,  
Like the rising sun appeared 'Dharmendra'  
At his guru's feet he surrendered  
And delusion and infatuation he conquered . . .

The guru saw and recognized  
'Swami Satya-ananda',  
Master of the self, truth and bliss incarnate  
And he blessed him with these words of grace,  
'Divine messenger Satyam, in the darkness of the world,  
Be thou the light.'

—25th December 1956



## *Worship*

*(A deep yearning to behold Swami Satyananda as guru . . .  
prayers . . . refusal to be guru time and again, yet an offering  
of worship . . .)*

O my guru, my master  
O omniscient one!  
You know every thought and substance  
Yet feign ignorance and innocence

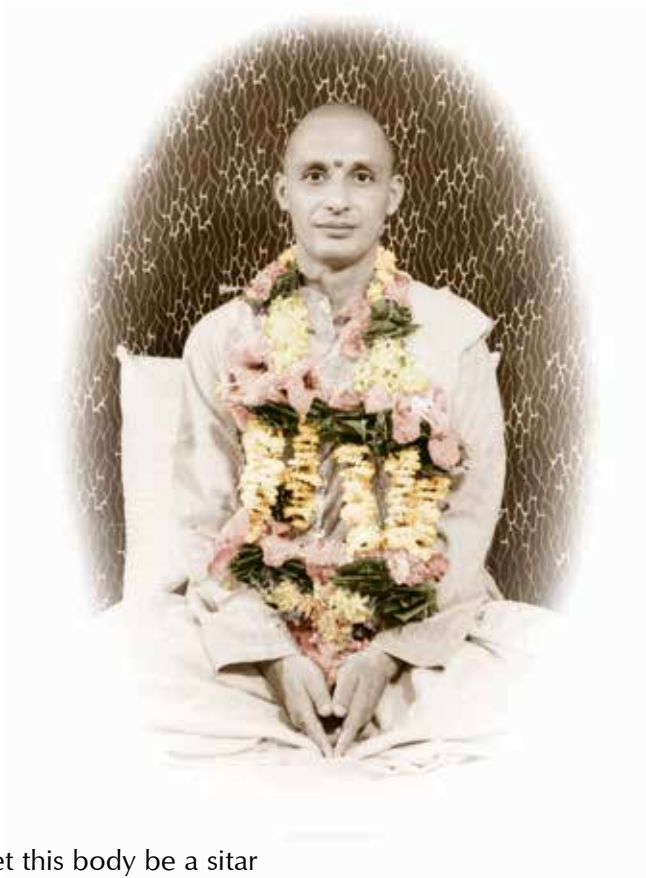
The storm that is rising within  
Is shaking my entire being  
But I've accepted you as my guru and  
I know you'll give me something

O friend and guide of the lost and errant!  
What for is this punishment?  
Once full of verve and colour  
Life is now totally lacklustre

You infused hope and joy into my life  
And the lotus of my heart opened up in delight  
Can you now bear to see it wither before your gaze?  
Is that why you became the gardener in the first place?

This world is like a fathomless ocean  
And inexperienced is my companion  
Will you simply watch us drown?  
Is that why you became the boatman?

O my Ram,  
My glorious guide, my Shyam  
When the storm darkens the lushness of spring  
Will you watch with no feeling?



Let this body be a sitar  
And this mind its strings  
Bestow such power into this veena  
That the world sings and dances in bliss

Let all hear the music of Expansiveness  
Softly strum the songs of Transcendence  
You are the repository of Self-knowledge  
Friend of the forlorn, remover of the sufferings of bondage

O my guru, my master  
O omniscient one.

—19th May 1958



### *Pushpanjali*

25 December

On this auspicious, holy and divine day –

The blessed son of Mother Ganga,

divine father, at your feet

millions of voices offer

the fragrance of their music.

In this world full of lust, anger, hatred,

arrogance, delusion and greed.

O Abode of purity!

You are the divine priest,

spreading the light of knowledge, love and peace.

At your divine lotus feet,

we bow in reverential pranaam

and offer light, incense, prayer and worship.

O Supreme ocean of mercy!

The heart makes this entreaty,

may the river of satya and dharma,



jnana and bhakti,  
ever and unceasingly flow  
from your divine mouth.

My master!  
Transform this world so for evermore  
it becomes the eternal pilgrimage of Dwarka.  
And all of us lost and drifting travellers  
find and follow your footsteps,  
making the narrow lanes of our Mathura  
wide, beautiful and tranquil.

O God!  
May the days of our Swamiji  
be golden  
and his nights silvery.  
May the words that pour forth  
from his divine mouth  
be like the immortal, nectarine  
hymns of the Vedas.  
And may each and every corner  
of this vast, wide earth  
be lit afresh,  
its every moment purified  
like an altar in the abode of gods  
through the effulgence  
of the sun-like Satyananda.

O pillar of light!  
Guide to lost travellers,  
a million pranaams at your feet.  
Eulogies and hosannas of praise and adoration  
pour forth from the whole globe,  
and countless voices sing the song,  
Jaya Satyananda, Jaya jaya Satyananda  
Om Satyananda Om Om Om



### *Bhavanjali*

My master, my Gurudev!  
Come, I welcome you, O lord of my inner space!  
Come before my eyes, but your feet  
I shall wash today with my tears.  
I shall offer you  
the seat of my heart, the flowers of my eyes,  
the lamp of my soul, a mind full of hope and despair.  
The new year has dawned  
at an hour fragrant with flowers  
and many glimmers of hope  
are alight in the space of the heart.  
The fragrance of sandalwood,  
the smoky wisps of burning incense  
play on the inner strings and leave me delirious.  
Wherever I turn my gaze  
I see golden beams of light.  
Is this the dawn of a new day  
or its demise at the twilight hour?

The sun of a new age  
is peeping over a soft horizon,  
and the moon,  
through the shadows of the mango grove  
is scattering its dulcet rays.  
Until the tears of Dharmashakti  
falling on those lotus feet  
turn into flowers,  
And until those flowers  
begin to echo the sound of  
'Om Satyam'  
'Sri Satyam Om Jaya Satyam',  
With a smile on her lips,  
and tears in her eyes  
Dharmashakti's mind and pranas,  
entranced and engrossed,  
will resound with 'Om Satyam'  
'Om Sri Satyanandaya Namah'.



## *Prayer to the Master*

I have arrived at your door,  
Bearing the gift of my heart  
Now it is up to you whether,  
To reject or accept.

Listen to my miserable sobs,  
Hear my plaintive cries  
I have brought a bouquet of tears,  
Take it or scatter, as you please.

The temple of my heart is up in flames,  
Send your cooling showers of love  
My eyes have been shut for ages,  
Open them and show me the way to live.

My madness has lost itself,  
In the curly locks adorning your face  
My whole world lies hidden,  
Behind your gentle lashes.

I am offering a garland of faith,  
To adorn your beautiful neck  
If a teardrop were to roll down my eyes,  
Please accept that as well.

O Lord of the infinite voids,  
O kindler of the divine light!  
O ultimate refuge of one and all,  
Make me the dust of thy holy feet.

## *At the Guru's Feet*

I am making a garland of flowers,  
A garland of my life with flowers . . .

These flowers carry my soul,  
All my aspirations and my goals.  
I hope to attain something  
The shelter of guru's feet my only yearning.

In the presence of 'Bare Guru'  
I set my heart upon 'Chhote guru'.  
For this little transgression the Lord  
Made me wander for some days and more.

The wait was finally over  
The auspicious day and moment was here.  
The mantra of Rama he gave to me  
And called me by the name of 'Dharmashakti'.

On the sacred day of Shravan Poornima  
You lit up my heart with the flame of Rama  
And at the feet of my guru I offered  
The very same garland of flowers.

—29th June 1958



## *Surrender*

O my deity, my Gurudev!  
At the advent of the new year, come  
Scattering golden rays, come.  
The lamp of the heart, the flowers of the eyes  
are ever yours.  
In my hope-filled heart a new light shines  
and becoming the worshipper and the worship  
I offer myself at your feet.  
But Master . . .  
You will have to accept a dakshina.  
A priceless jewel  
that I am about to beget  
from the very essence of my  
pranas and soul  
is what I wish to offer at your lotus feet.  
This is my earnest desire.

My Lord!  
I know you will accept him  
and make him your own. Then –  
a promise you must also make,  
to cast the little jewel  
in your own mould,  
to fill him with your divine qualities  
and give him the sheen you radiate.  
You are bright as the blazing sun  
But you will have to come  
to make him into a lamp that lights up the night,  
For you have embraced Vrat and Basant.



1959 is bidding adieu  
1960 is eager to arrive  
Come and write  
The future of your protégé  
on a fresh page.  
O destiny maker!  
With a smile on her lips  
and tears in her eyes  
Dharmashakti will wait for you.  
Jaya Satyam, Sri Satyam  
Jaya Jaya Sri Gurudev.

*—27th December 1959*

## *Aradhana*

Let not the moments of worship cease to be  
Before the libation is offered, let not the eyes become  
empty.

My lord resides afar in the Himalayas  
and the light of the lamp is very feeble  
Let not the lamp of my prana be extinguished,  
or the flowers of worship wilt.

My eyes have turned to stone staring at the road  
Tearful prayers incessantly I have poured  
Not a boon, but grant me a darshan of yours  
so my pranas may revive and my eyes rejoice.

O epitome of selflessness!  
Listen to the unspoken words of my heart  
Let your name every breath of mine chant,  
making me ever pure and free of all fault.

The prayer and worship offered for eons and ages  
With japa, tapa and sanyam, the methods of the sages  
Let not the sins of yore overpower  
These flowers I've gathered over hundreds of years  
Let not the moments of aradhana cease to be . . .



## *Do not Accept Defeat*

The hour of your trial is close  
Today your strength do you not lose.  
Casting aside the bed of roses  
Don a garland of thorns.

Abandon the ephemeral worldly coolness  
And on burning embers hold your step.  
Go on doing all that you must  
Heedless of the pain the burns have caused.

You may be all alone  
But laugh your way to your goal.  
Casting aside the bed of roses  
Don a garland of thorns.

Let go of delusion and infatuation  
Don't let your mind run to these diversions.  
Like a venomous snake you presumed a friend  
They will poison you to your end.

Set sail on the oceans with a smile on your face  
Steer the rudder of your life with grit and courage  
Casting aside the bed of roses  
Don a garland of thorns.



## *Golden Jubilee*

Satyam, you are the most glorious!  
Infusing into the world a strength beyond compare.

You are joyous in praise and insult,  
a sip of nectar or poison  
You do not hold any difference,  
between a curse or benediction.

Your faith in yourself is unshakeable,  
your inner strength so fierce,  
Whatever task you touch,  
O Swami, becomes flawless and simple.

In your victory lies distressed humanity's  
awakened triumphal cry  
Your sweet voice is indeed a blessing  
to the sentient and insentient alike.

This world mired in passion,  
Show it the path of true love  
Teaching them bondage-free restraint,  
Show them how to soar high above.

Becoming light, Satyam,  
Give this world the strength of faith.

—October 1973

## *Jaya Satyananda*



The waves of the Ganga sing along merrily  
Jaya Swami Satyananda, Jaya Satyananda Swami.

Discerning the emptiness of worldly pleasures  
you cast them aside with the sword of viveka  
and took refuge in the place where eternal peace reigns –  
The lotus feet of the Lord.

The waves of the Ganga sing along merrily . . .  
In the arduous journey of life  
you are the cool, comforting shade,  
You have descended into the lives of suffering multitudes  
To give them an able body and a purified mind.

The waves of the Ganga sing along merrily . . .  
You sing the songs of liberation in this age,  
O life bestower! O divine sage!  
Satyam, you are the very lifeblood of this land  
Gurudev, accept our million pranaams.

The waves of the Ganga sing along merrily  
Jaya Swami Satyananda, Jaya Satyananda Swami.

*—Guru Poornima, 1978*



### *Sumananjali*

O lord of the universe,  
I have seen you  
shining resplendently  
amongst august saints,  
floating tenuously  
on the notes of a veena,  
and wearing the garb of vernal blossoms,  
an open lotus  
lavishly scattering the nectarine pollen of your heart,  
O lord of the universe . . . I have seen you.

O lord of the mountains,  
You have carried  
ignorant and superstitious humanity  
to the peaks of waves  
as high as the Himalayas,  
Like a humble grain of sand  
or a puny wisp of straw  
rides on the wings of a wild gale,  
You have carried them  
on a journey to those auspicious heights,  
Telling them about the glory of those realms . . .  
I have seen you.

O Supreme Guru!  
In the precincts of Ganga Darshan  
Like the rays of the rising sun,  
The emperor of hearts  
of countless people,  
You have let flow  
the sacred river of yoga  
at Karna Chaura,  
and sanctified the environs with bhoomi pooja,  
A speck of dust at your feet, Dharmashakti,  
has seen you.

O omnipotent one!  
Riding the chariot of dawn  
in the eastern horizon,  
With your soft rays  
awakening the world  
from its deep slumber,  
At the hour celebrating  
the union of day and night,  
With a mind suffused with grace,  
showering nectar through your satsangs,  
blowing the conch of yoga,  
I have seen you.

O lord of infinite realms!  
I have seen you  
in many forms many a time,  
but what I have seen now,  
words fail me, I am unable to describe.  
Your mission of yoga,  
your tyaga, tapasya and samarpan,  
May they become immortal for ages and beyond.  
Holding the Mansarovar and the Himalayas in my eyes,  
I can only offer a silent prostration,  
Om Namo Narayanaya!

—25th December 1982

## *On the Banks of the Ganga*

On the banks of the northward flowing Ganga  
lies the ashram of my Gurudev  
Near the Ganga, at Karna Chaura  
is our dwelling by the Ganga.

Gurudev resides in Sri Niwas,  
And Karna Chaura has become the Sadhana Hall  
Kashtaharni Ghat is legendary  
Our Munger is indeed the Lord's own city.  
On the banks . . .

Ganga Darshan is our pilgrimage  
And Sri Niwas is heaven itself  
One can have the vision of Mother Ganga  
From Shakti Vihar, Yoga Arogya, or Annapoorna.  
On the banks . . .

Bestowing love to all, Swami Satyananda  
Is our revered Gurudev  
Devotees have come from all corners of the world  
Hearing of your name, beloved Gurudev.  
On the banks . . .

With honey-like words, discourses and satsangs,  
Dharma, karma and the meaning of life  
Concepts of philosophy and science  
He explains in the simplest of terms.  
On the banks . . .

Ganga Darshan and the research centre,  
All of you must visit  
Attain good health and inner serenity  
And let your life become joyous and happy.  
On the banks . . .

## *Sublime Sentiments*

When I remember you  
A golden day dawns forth  
The rays of the sun that spread  
Energize my mind and make it soar.  
O Gurudev!

Whether you remain before the funeral pyre  
Or sit amongst the five purifying fires  
Absorbed in the image of your guru you may be  
But I always find you within me.

O Yogarshi!  
When I place you upon  
the bed of my eyes  
and close the door of the eyelids,  
the image full of light that I see  
entrances me and fills me with bliss.  
All around in the world it is dark  
But unimpeded ahead I march  
my path is bright with your light,  
This is the teaching you imparted to me.

O Brahmarshi!  
The path that the rishis spoke of  
You walked on it and showed us how  
Your superhuman courage, for eons  
will provide an immortal message to all and one  
O Devarshi! Accept my million prostrations.  
Om Namo Narayanaya!

## *Darshan Poornima*

It was the day of July the 7th,  
a glorious dawn for disciples and devotees.  
Thousands had gathered in Deoghar  
There was also great tumult  
in Baba Baidyanath's darbar  
All had come for Guru Darshan  
And a vision of Shiva, in Baidyanath Dham  
Everyone was filled with hope and anticipation  
and thoughts ran in every direction.  
As the vermillion hue of the rising sun spread  
The queue of devotees stepped ahead.

The conch sounded  
the gates opened  
and the devotees entered the hallowed ground  
Thoughts of purity coursed through everyone  
There was peace and silence  
both within and without.  
After the darshan of Paramguru Swami Sivananda  
and prostrating before Adiguru Shankaracharya  
when we reached before a trident  
Gurudev was  
immersed in meditation  
in his panchagni place.

Everyone stood shell-shocked  
Our thought processes all but stopped  
Oh what a vision you showed to us!  
Have the sages Valmiki and Vishwamitra  
come amongst us as Satyananda?  
Is this real or  
am I in the land of dreams?  
Indeed, it is verily him,  
Our dear, revered Swamiji!



The time was limited  
and the crowd outside was unlimited,  
Paying respects to Tulsi Mai  
everyone came outside.  
But they had all left their hearts inside  
Leaving a realm where peace reigned supreme  
the heart ached and  
the mind felt totally bereft of its mooring.

‘Gurudev! Installing you on the throne of our hearts,  
we learnt everything from you  
We received love, wisdom, a new life  
Did you appear on this earth  
to give a glimpse of Satya yuga  
in this dark and dreary Kali yuga?  
O Master, you are omnipotent indeed.  
The example you have set  
is a source of pride for all of us.’  
So saying, everyone began to sob  
The sentiments of the heart  
flowed out in the shape of tears.  
We say only one prayer to the Lord,  
May our Gurudev remain in our hearts  
for all times to come.

Were this not the age of Kali,  
then just as Sivaganga and Neelganga  
are eternal streams in Baba Baidyanath Dham,  
the Ganga created here in Rikhia  
out of the tears of countless devotees  
would have also lasted for ages.  
O Great Guru! Please accept the salutations  
of thousands upon thousands of your ardent devotees.

## *You are Everything*

O Paramahamsa Avadhoota!

I am astonished to step into  
your manasarovar,  
your city of swans.

This city is teeming with devotees,  
Ma Chandi herself is present in her felicity.  
And in a mudra of jubilation  
You are moving amongst the people,  
Lest any is deprived of  
your auspicious darshan.

O Paramahamsa!

Since you arrived in the abode of Baba Baidyanath  
Your destitute neighbours have been empowered,  
You gave lavishly from Bholenath's Store  
No one left empty-handed from your door  
Sivananda Math is the banner under which you  
have hoisted high the name of your Guru.

O Paramahamsa,

What a vision you have held up before us!

Anguished by the insult  
her father meted out to her consort,  
Ma Sati shed her mortal frame.  
And wherever the parts of her body fell  
A pilgrimage place it became.  
Bhole Baba also chose his address  
next to Devi's resting place  
And throughout the world thus  
Babadham become famous.

O Paramahamsa Avadhoota!

Receiving a divine mandate  
you made Sati's cremation ground your sadhana place  
At a tender age Mother Parvati

Had performed the sadhana of panchagni.  
The very same austerity you too perfected  
A wondrous feat which the entire world witnessed.  
Now by conducting the Satchandi Yajna,  
you have paid homage to Devi Ma.  
and through the medium of kanya poojan  
you have raised the stature of all women.

O Paramahansa Avadhoota!  
What a miracle you have wrought  
What an ideal of renunciation and dispassion you've  
taught!  
Legions of devotees and disciples  
looked on in wonder and dismay  
when you handed over  
all your works, accomplishments and fruits of sadhana  
to Swami Niranjanananda.  
This is my auspicious blessing  
to Swami Niranjan,  
May your benedictory hand  
be always on his head,  
and his head forever bowed at your feet,  
to obey you and follow in your footsteps,  
may Niranjan be ever poised.

O Divine Father!  
What more can I say?  
You stand resolute and unshakeable  
like the great Mahadeva himself.  
The Ganga of eternal blessings  
flows uninterruptedly from your divine being  
And the whole of mankind  
is eager to partake of this divine stream.  
You are firmly imprinted  
in the thoughts and sentiments  
of each and everyone.  
Everyone looks upon you  
as his own, as his very own soul.

## *Such is the Ideal Mother*

She who sheds attachment  
for the sake of her son,  
Know her to be a true mother,  
Such indeed is the ideal mother.

King Gopichand's mother told him,  
'O son, adopt the path of yoga'  
And the fame of the obedient son  
has lasted unblemished till today.

The resolute Madalasa vowed,  
'Whoever enters my womb  
will gain liberation and  
never have to be born again.'

She who pulls her son out  
from the chain of existence  
She is the true benefactress,  
Such indeed is the ideal mother

When Sumitra heard that Lakshmana  
had been mortally wounded in Lanka  
She thought of Rama alone on the battlefield  
and became greatly agitated.

'Immediately go to Lanka, my son,'  
said she to Shatrughana,  
'Rama is without a brother at this critical juncture,'  
Such indeed is the ideal mother.

## *Blessings*

You are the light of my eyes, and I feel you ever nearby  
Inexpressible feelings of maternal pride,  
are floating in the river of my eyes.

Your blood, bone and marrow are mine,  
the patterns of your mind too  
Your voice is mine, O radiant son!  
And the halo of your pranas too.

The resolve in you is mine, so is the bounce in your steps  
My son! my essence is in you,  
I am in each nerve and vein of yours.

You are a ray of light for the whole world,  
you will dispel the darkness of the human race  
The only desire of the mother is this, my son  
May you become the vermillion of your Guru's forehead.



## *My Precious Lamp*

From darkness to radiance my precious lamp is walking  
And his footsteps the whole world is following . . .

You shall be a great guru upon this earth,  
an apostle of peace, the hope of the helpless  
Give succour and inspiration to the forlorn and cheerless,  
bearing in stoic silence the fierce blows of darkness.

From darkness to radiance my precious lamp is walking  
And his footsteps a train of lost travellers is following. . .

Like a candle that steadily burns  
Never defeated by the might of storms  
Teach the selfish people of this world  
how to give, love and serve.

From darkness to radiance my precious lamp is walking  
And his footsteps a flock of aspirants is following . . .

The sun may set and the moon may also disappear  
but my precious lamp will not falter  
You are the symbol of my hope and faith, my son,  
you have inherited your guru's shakti and inspiration.

From darkness to radiance my precious lamp is walking  
And his footsteps legions of sannyasins are following . . .





Swami Dharmashakti Saraswati was born in 1924 in Sahaspur Lohara (Madhya Pradesh), India, on the auspicious day of Buddha Pournima and attained mahasamadhi on 12th February 2013 in Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Munger.

She first came into contact with Swami Satyananda Saraswati in 1953, and thus began a lifetime of unswerving devotion. In 1958, she received mantra diksha from Sri Swamiji, earning the distinction of becoming his first disciple. In 1960, she gave birth to the child who would be known as Swami Niranjanananda, Sri Swamiji's spiritual successor. In 1967, she was initiated into the Dashnami sannyasa tradition.

A pillar of Sri Swamiji's mission from its very inception, Swami Dharmashakti played various roles in its development. From 1963 to 1976, she served as editor, publisher and distributor of *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* magazines in Rajnandgaon. In 1972, she was appointed patron of the Rajnandgaon School of Yoga and secretary of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement. In 1985, she came to reside in Ganga Darshan, Munger, and in 1990, she was appointed acharya and president of Sri Panch Dashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara, Rikhia.

Fondly known as Ammaji, Swami Dharmashakti's life exemplified renunciation and total dedication to guru's mission. Upholding the finest virtues of spirituality with quiet grace and humility, she was a source of strength and hope to all who sought her guidance. A rare soul, her name will be counted among the foremost women saints of this century.



This collection of inspiring incidents and anecdotes from the life of Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati is a treasure trove for the sincere seeker. The lives of saints have always been a constant source of inspiration for humanity, and Sri Swamiji is no exception.

Swami Satyananda is a unique saint and yogi. Even after ascending to the summit of yoga and acquiring the promised fruits thereof, he did not spend his life in a state of idyllic samadhi, but employed his yogic powers unceasingly and untiringly for the upliftment and betterment of mankind. Yet he remained unattached to it all. Through his magnanimous deeds, this incomparable yogi conquered the hearts of millions all over the globe. Whoever came into contact with him was immediately and irrevocably transformed.

From a spiritual standpoint, the value of *Mere Aradhya: My Beloved Guru* is no less than any of the ancient Indian scriptures. It is our heartfelt hope and wish that these spiritual gems from Sri Swamiji's life bring light, joy and wisdom into the lives of all sincere aspirants on the spiritual path.



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